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ABSTRACT

The Qualitative Studies section of the Proceedings contains the following 10 papers: "An Alternative to Alternative Media'" (James Hamilton); "A Critical Assessment of News Coverage of the Ethical Implications of Genetic Testing" (David A. Craig); "Earth First! and the Boundaries of Postmodern Environmental Journalism" (Rick Clifton Moore); "Social Movement Organization Collective Action Frames and Press Receptivity: A Case Study of Land Use Activism in a Maryland County" (Brian B. Feeney); "Building a Heartline to America: Quiz Shows and the Ideal of Audience Participation in Early Broadcasting" (Olaf Hoerschelmann); "The Cadaverous Bad Boy as Dream-Shadow Trickster: Why Freddy Krueger Won't Let Teens Rest In Peace" (Paulette D. Kilmer); "Reframing a House of Mirrors: Communication and Empowerment in a Community Leadership Program" (Eleanor M. Novek); "On the Possibility of Communicating: Critical Theory, Feminism, and Social Position" (Fabienne Darling-Wolf); "Memory and Record: Evocations of the Past in Newspapers" (Stephanie Craft); and "Interior Design Magazines as Neurotica" (Kim Golombisky). (PA)

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

(81st, Baltimore, MD, August 5-8, 1998). QUALITATIVE STUDIES.

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AN ALTERNATIVE TO "ALTERNATIVE MEDIA"

James Hamilton
Assistant Professor
Department of Communication
Blake-B 120
State University of New York at Geneseo
1 College Circle
Geneseo, NY 14454
(716) 245-5223
hamilton@uno.cc.geneseo.edu

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AN ALTERNATIVE TO "ALTERNATIVE MEDIA"

It is the province of journalism to lead.
—Horace Greeley[1]

[T]here are in fact no masses, but only ways of seeing people as masses.
—Raymond Williams[2]

A group of journalists, editors, and publishers in North America debated recently how best to start and operate an advertising syndicate, which would centralize advertising sales, spread revenue among members, and therefore help keep them all in business. Topics of discussion included how to get start-up money to pay for the syndicate's operation before it generated its own income, whether to hire professional fund-raisers and consultants to track potential markets and advertising trends, how many sales representatives to hire and how to pay them, and a host of related organizational issues.

Although this is a common discussion in commercial media organizations, what makes this particular one notable is that it was conducted by decidedly radical journalists, editors, and publishers.[3] What links this particular case to the cultural history of alternative media in the United States is how its participants negotiate a characteristic contradiction. On one hand, they share the goal of replacing capitalism with a more equitable and humane social order. On the other hand, the only way they see to keep publishing is to seek advertising to help pay publishing expenses—therefore laying themselves open to charges of helping perpetuate the very capitalist system they seek to challenge.

Concern about this dilemma was raised in a proposal for the syndicate under the heading "Political Problems."

> Under capitalism, advertising is a form of propaganda designed to integrate culture and human feelings into models of consumption and accumulation ("lifestyles").

> This type of propaganda is antithetical to the values of most alternative papers, and many do not accept advertising for this reason (Smith 1996a).

Those who posted responses to this concern generally dismissed it. As one put it, "it's quite possible to simultaneously get advertisers-with-agendas who support us and a vast collective of business[es] that doesn't [*sic*] care what we say.... [W]e found that the advertisers are perfectly willing to fund people who would love to drive them out of business." An example given concerned the clothing maker Eddie Bauer, which placed "a large number of new ads just after we ran a long piece on their *maquiladora* labor standards on the front and editorial pages" (Greer 1996). Another discussant noted that her/his paper was saved financially "thanks, in part, to a massive ad campaign [their Canadian advertising syndicate] signed for us with Chrysler this month (colour ads, and lots of 'em). I'm no big lover of ads, and would love to live without 'em. However, we need to have enough cash in the coffers to pay the printers and keep on producing quality alternative journalism" ("Re: Response" 1996).

An editor/publisher without student-government allocations or grant money to fall back on dismissed with less patience concerns about advertising in alternative media.

> I can very much appreciate critiques of *particular* advertisers, like the apt concern the *last* indicator had about taking Ben & Jerry's ads—when Ben & Jerry's has covered up fiascoes like their knowing destruction of the Indian-run brazil nut cooperatives in Brazil that they claimed to be helping, in the name of meeting the demand for their "socially-responsible" Rainforest Crunch ice-cream. But I need some real convincing of how (in my case) I can be a socialist fish in a capitalist sea—without swimming around in it. In other words, how can we build mass movements without bucks? [emphasis original] (Pramas 1996).

The author of the ad syndicate proposal responded to these objections by agreeing with them. He pointed out that he intended simply to raise the issue of a possible contradiction, and he felt personally that any potential contradiction was less important than simply getting a working advertising syndicate off the ground. "It angers me that most papers must rely on advertising in order to keep on publishing. It also angers me that most national progressive organizations rely on foundations and rich people to fund projects. But

I don't see any way around it right now (unless we have the revolution tomorrow)" (Smith 1996b).

I present these concerns and the energy with which they are debated not to belittle them—much the opposite. Activists engaged in alternative media make often immense sacrifices to work selflessly for progressive social change. Rather, the point of opening with these comments is to note examples of the tacit understanding of alternative media in the United States upon which such judgments are based. Within this understanding, advertising is often seen as a necessary means in a capitalist society for building the large-scale organization and operation needed to effectively counter mainstream media and the status-quo agendas they aid.

Despite its seeming commonsense basis, this strategy has yet to achieve such goals. An evaluation of alternative media in the United States—taking account of their scrappy persistence in the face of often virulent opposition, but also of their insignificance in the lives of most Americans—is a classic example of deciding whether the glass is half empty or half full (Glessing 1970; Conlin 1974; Armstrong 1981; Peck 1985; Barlow 1988; Kaniss 1991, 133-159; Bekken 1993; Godfried 1997). Yet, despite the debate and notable gains in certain areas, an indigenous, ongoing, cohesive social movement or coalition of movements capable of meaningful challenge to the dominant has yet to coalesce in the United States, with or without the aid of alternative media (*Socialist Review* 1994; Gitlin 1995; Aronowitz 1996; Moore 1997).

This exploratory essay suggests some reasons for this limited effect. The primary point argued here is that traditionally conceived "mass" media (newspapers, books, television, radio) are inherently incapable of playing a significant role in assisting alternative social and political movements, due to the professionalization of their practice and the resulting separation of media workers from the people whom they represent. Scholars of many different perspectives wonder more generally whether greater professionalization inevitably means greater democratization (Schudson 1987), suggesting that the way in which a medium is organized and what kinds of social relations it assists may be more crucial than the kinds of content produced. Traditional practices of alternative media are based in a mass-culture, vanguardist view of the relation between producers and readers and therefore legitimize a corporatized model of media organization with its attendant limitations. After outlining the dilemma of alternative-media organization in the United States, this essay sketches in broad strokes how alternative media have been constituted ideologically by looking at a selection of its practitioners in the U.S. The essay concludes by suggesting an alternative basis for a theory and the practice of alternative media that may better fit the realities of political movements in the U.S. today.

Alternative media and the mass-culture perspective

Media practice is grounded in theories of society (Hardt 1993), and alternative media are no different. Despite different attitudes regarding the dangers of advertising, alternative-media practitioners who adopt mass-media forms work within the theoretical terrain of a mass-culture perspective (Bennett 1982). Those who challenge the status quo, and who appreciate rather than fear the ability of mass media to organize social movements, often view their role more or less explicitly as one of educating and mobilizing the "masses" in the service of the cause or movement (Altschull 1995: 209-216; Allen 1985; Seeger 1987). Such a perspective is embedded in traditional behaviorist and idealist perspectives with all their superficialities. On one hand, fears about the effects of advertising infer a passive audience, while, on the other hand, the dismissal of such fears overstate the autonomy of individuals and deny the relevance of such theoretical issues to the immediate and practical matter of how to fund alternative media now (Golding & Ferguson 1997; Curran et al. 1996: 251-358).

Both the fear and its dismissal rely on the same dubious assumptions. Both take for granted that effective social movements are mass movements (widespread and generally uniform in agenda, tactics, and goals); that mass movements require mass-produced and mass-circulating media products to maintain and assist them; that producing such mass-media products requires a centralized, corporatized mode of organization to carry out mass-scale production and distribution; and, finally, that the largest possible size of the media organization and the widest possible distribution of its products equals maximum social impact (Downing 1984: 152). Within this conception, there's no getting around the fact that, to pay for this expansion and therefore have a chance of achieving goals of social change, one needs money—the more, the better. Hence, the requirement for capital and the resulting large-scale, corporatized organization is not natural or optional, but built into the assumed theory of media and society.

In addition, the debate about whether to accept advertising does not inquire into the deeper social and cultural implications of capital-intensive, technically sophisticated forms of media that are assumed as necessary in the first place. While political-economic debates about the imperatives of commercialism comprise an important body of work relevant to understanding the corporatization of media, they have less to say about such pressures on alternative media (Bagdikian 1992; Garnham 1990; Mosco 1996; Croteau and Hoynes 1994; McChesney 1997; Barnouw et al. 1997). However, one can suggest such some implications.

The first implication is how the assumed necessity of using a "mass" medium determines its form and institutional imperatives, and vice-versa. A mass medium is an expensive proposition that requires capital, with advertising a ready source in a capitalist society such as the United States. The resulting commercial relationship pushes the media venture into forms that solidify the need for capital. For example, few well-heeled advertisers would pay to place ads in a photocopied newsletter stapled together in a kitchen and handed out on the street. But a stable, ongoing magazine or newspaper with sophisticated-enough production to adequately reproduce halftone or color photographs is another matter entirely—especially when such publications use professional production standards and have an identifiable, documented readership relevant to advertisers' product or service. Whether these characteristics are in the young Republicans' newspaper or a leftist-radical magazine makes no difference to advertisers as long as they are present. In this way, politics is indeed irrelevant. Structural pressures brought to bear by the assumption of the need for mass media and the resulting decision to solicit advertising run very deeply, shaping the design and practice of the organization—whether print or electronic—into capital-intensive, professionalized forms.

The second implication is the limitation on participation due to this professionalization. Among those who have noted such problems is cultural theorist Raymond Williams. As summarized by Colin Sparks in his concise introduction to Williams' thought regarding democratic communication, "Williams [not only] demonstrated how the dominant theories of mass communication contained antidemocratic propositions as part of their fundamental definitions…[, he] put forward concrete proposals as to how democratic communication might be made into a human reality" (Sparks 1993: 69-70). In reaction to the mass-culture perspective, "Williams argued that the new institutions of communications were not a product of working people themselves, but produced for them by others, usually for profit" (Sparks 1993: 72). Overlook the phrase "usually for profit," and this describes too often the professionalized status of alternative media. The structural pressure on producers to abide by the forms and conventions of "quality journalism," "quality video," "quality radio," and the like in order to secure financial support means that other kinds of contributions that don't fit that definition can't be included. In addition, professional requirements of information-gathering, writing, editing, and production requires training, access to available resources, and time available to few people outside the academy or profession.

Therefore, instead of being a sign of health and vitality, becoming a sizable organization with a large funding base is perhaps better regarded as evidence of the self-defeating height to which barriers to popular participation have been erected, despite often substantial efforts to the contrary. People who have the time, energy, training, and resources to produce material in these forms are therefore placed in the position of, at best, attempting to represent their audiences, therefore leveling often strident differences (Williams 1983: 110-121). Compelling material can be produced, yet at the price of a deep separation between journalists and readers, producers and consumers. Acceptance and practice of this distinction activates deeper kinds of social relations in capitalist societies, with perhaps the most disabling ones based in the notion of consumption, defined as a choice from limited options for the purpose of individual use or appreciation. In this way, the social goals of building a resilient, indigenous, democratic popular movement or coalition of movements are impaired from the start by the imposition of such individualizing social relationships.

A cultural theory of alternative media

Proposals for escaping the confines of the mass-culture perspective on media and society exist in the literature of media studies and social criticism. However, they have yet to make a significant impact in the practice of alternative media in the U.S., judging not only by the debate summarized at the beginning of this essay, but in commentary that describes efforts to forge viable social and political movements with alternative media (Friedman 1974; Smith 1983; Glass 1984; Grace 1985; Santa Cruz 1995).

The initial clarification must be between "media" and "communication," and in what way both are involved in the workings of a social order. As a practical means of communication, media amplify and make durable the expressions of individuals, thereby making them available to many more people than would otherwise be the case (Williams 1980b). Although related to technical processes of reproduction, amplification, and fixing (making durable), communication must not be reduced to them. If seen as a technological process of manufacture, distribution and consumption, communication then simply names the use of "media products," and, as such, portrays it as functionally equivalent to any other consumerist practice. More broadly speaking, by conflating communication with media, communication is reduced to an optional add-on to society—at best, a means of conveying ideas about more basic and important processes—rather than essential to it.

In contrast with being a synonym for "media," communication is better seen as the creative activity of the making of a particular social order—as the very process by which a social order comes into being and does its work. Raymond Williams emphasizes this kind of understanding in his characterization of culture as "ordinary," in the sense of being a widespread process of formulating and learning new ways of organizing experience and of finding the form/content to present it in such a way that others can understand that experience (Williams 1958; Williams 1961: 31). Such ways of seeing are not epiphenomenal to the day-to-day conduct of human affairs, but, rather, they direct them.

In a later essay about the "base-superstructure" dichotomy of orthodox Marxist cultural theory, Williams makes this point forcefully. Instead of being a reflection or expression of other, more "real" forces in society, Williams writes that communication—the making and sharing of ways of seeing—is the means by which social relations are constituted and practiced. As he writes, economic activity and any other kind of productive activity "is already a certain mode of social co-operation and the application and development of a certain body of social knowledge" (Williams 1977: 91). To put it differently, economies aren't machines that run themselves, just as society's material base isn't a thing. Rather, they are composed of and put into practice through working human relationships, and it is the mutual understanding, acceptance and practice of a specific set of relationships that comprises the bedrock of any social order. The production, circulation, adoption, and defense of these mutual understandings that make possible specific kinds of relationships can be seen as the basic process of society, of communication. When seen in this way, the importance of media and communication to society (as well as their relationship to each other) has been noted by a wide range of writers for many years (Carey 1989; Duncan 1962; Heyer 1988: 1-48). Alternative media enable alternative means of communication, which together make possible the articulation of a social order different from and often opposed to a dominant one.

In addition to clarifying terms and their relationships, a cultural perspective on media and communication also helps locate the struggle between social orders in conflicts over media resources as well as over certain traditions and social understandings, and it is this dual sense (technical and cultural resources) that the study and practice of alternative media should encompass. That only until recently has it focused primarily on the former instead of the latter indicates both a shortcoming and a promising trend (Eason 1984; Solomon & McChesney 1993; Hardt & Brennen 1995; Calabrese & Borchert 1996).

Such a view also critiques the traditional goals of alternative media. The mass-culture perspective sees the role of alternative media as essentially the negative exercise of unmasking a dominant ideology, thereby "delivering the people" from false consciousness and removing the bonds that repress. Yet, one should heed Williams' observation that the process of social change is much more difficult than the simple removal of controls. "[I]f our social and political and cultural ideas and assumptions and habits were merely the result of a specific manipulation, or a kind of overt training which might be simply ended or withdrawn, then the society would be very much easier to move and to change than in practice it has ever been or is" (Williams 1980b: 37). This is due to the need not just for critique, but for creative, positive action of proposing, debating, and putting into practice new kinds of social relationships and, ultimately, a new social order. Williams' recasting of the problem of alternative media in these terms is a positive advance. It suggests goals of popular participation, maximum responsiveness and sensitivity to emergent ways of thinking, and maximum availability of expressions of such ways (Sparks 1993).

When the mass-culture perspective is left behind in this way, problems of commercialism for alternative media are more fundamental than whether advertising conflicts with the political goals of the publication. In addition to the effect of pressures to adopt a corporatized, capital-intensive form, if media products are simply to be consumed by individuals, the very "content" of that relationship disables the political potential of even the most hard-hitting alternative media. The problem of commercialism is therefore not only due to the pressures to adopt a mainstream, professionalized mode of production, but due also to the perpetuation of a characteristic set of social relations brought about and maintained by certain kinds of cultural organization. It is this deep and powerful set of conventions upon which capitalist societies rest that alternative media must resist and challenge.

Historicizing "alternative media"

The history of alternative media in the U.S. not only describes the struggle to maintain political movements in the face of often virulent opposition, but also the struggle to overcome the inherent limitations of forms of media and of communication. How "alternative media" have been constituted ideologically has very important implications for current conceptions, because today's practice is a continuation of or a response to such traditions. Although the sheer number of labor, dissident, radical, and otherwise other-than-dominant media represent a immense diversity in aims and goals, some basic commonalities can be suggested for purposes of exploratory illustration. Despite the variety of ways in which "alternative media" have been practiced, what has remained consistent is a vanguardist or consumerist relationship with readers.

Mechanized, mediated communication in the early United States is often characterized as "alternative," in the sense of being a response to Anglo traditions of media control such as licensing, censorship, and control by religious authorities. Yet, such publications were still a means of elite direction, not of popular participation. Moral education was the aim, and the essay/polemic and aphorism in newspapers, broadsheets, and pamphlets its major forms, with perhaps the foremost practitioner in these senses being Benjamin Franklin. As Jeffery Smith summarizes, "Franklin acted on his Enlightenment belief, one also embraced by Jefferson, that people would be rational and public-spirited if given freedom, education, and the proper environment" (Smith 1990: p. 28). However, such freedom was in practice the freedom to read what others wrote. Franklin regarded his *Pennsylvania Gazette* as a "Means of Instruction" and as a way to "'prepare the Minds of the People' for his civic projects" (Smith 1990: pp. 40, 42). In this way, Franklin and other Enlightenment, deist thinkers in the colonies and in the new nation advocated a particular kind of social order, one that was as limiting in practice (for slaves, women, and indigenous peoples) as it was high-minded in the abstract.

Reformist publications of the 19th Century continued this role of alternative media as a moral educator. For example, in an 1840 letter to William Channing on the eve of the debut of *The Dial*, Margaret Fuller, editor of the transcendentalist journal, wrote that "this periodical will not aim at leading public opinion, but at stimulating each man [*sic*] to think for himself [*sic*]" (Fuller 1840). Even in the preface to *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, a book credited with laying the philosophical groundwork for the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 and the women's rights movements of later years, Fuller writes not of concrete situations and necessary actions, but, "if interested by these suggestions, [for women] to search their own experience and intuitions for better, and fill up with fit materials the trenches that hedge them in" (Fuller 1845).

Others at the time sought to educate by assuming a more forceful leadership. For example, abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison remarked in a January, 1831 essay that "the apathy of the people" could not be overcome simply by informing readers about the existence of slavery (a well-known fact), but instead had to throw the accepted practice of slavery into high relief by presenting it in such a way as to make its abolition a moral imperative (Garrison 1852: 63). People were regarded as morally too timid to act on their own, and they therefore had to be prodded.

In these ways, alternative media sought to ensure social stability (an earlier role of such editors as Franklin) or encourage reformist social change (such as Fuller and Garrison and, later, Greeley and Pulitzer). Whatever the editors of such journals thought about the abilities and status of readers compared to their own, what is clear is that editors' and writers' role was to produce and readers' to read.

Alongside the reformist press arose a different kind of alternative. As put into practice by the mass-produced urban papers, it was not a new social or political cause, but the use of commercial advertising as a mode of material support (Schudson 1978; Schiller 1981; Baldasty 1992). Such a development built upon the mass-production techniques pioneered by evangelical tract publishing (Nord 1984), but it placed production and structured its content into a new role of serving audiences to advertisers—creating even more of a gulf between media workers and, in this case, "consumers of news."

Champions of the penny press felt it served as an alternative to narrowly partisan publications. The market was seen as a self-regulating mechanism that faithfully translated society's needs into material goods, or, in the case of mass-produced media, society's views into published stories. Not only could media ventures be funded seemingly without the biasing restrictions of personal viewpoints, but they would naturally reflect the diverse wishes and interests of its readership through the alchemy of the market. Commercialization therefore seemed to be a way for readers themselves to dictate the content of their own media to satisfy their own wants and needs, with the added benefit of enriching publishers and driving economic growth. Media organizations were simply transparent, passive servants of the people.

The irony is, of course, that the market press relied upon as well as promoted just the opposite: capital-intensive mechanization and corporate forms of organization, which in turn required much higher levels of professionalization and corporatization of news production (Baldasty 1992; Solomon 1995). An industrial-sized servant of the people therefore was seen to have emerged, boosting quickly however the necessity for capital to a point far beyond the reach of all but the most wealthy of individuals (William Randolph Hearst, for example). By the early 20th Century, the capital requirements of mainstream media exceeded even these. Although pointed out by labor media for decades, it wasn't until the early 20th Century, in the form of Will Irwin's *Collier's* series on the newspaper, that awareness of these limitations emerged more generally (Irwin 1911).

Other media practitioners in the United States in the 19th and early 20th centuries experimented with different ways of organizing media as well as with different cultural forms that would better aid their respective movements. The diversity of such efforts is suggested by the experience of three practitioners, all of whom sought to lead or contribute to the formation of significant social and political movements. Although they worked within capital-intensive forms, they struggled to overcome such forms' individualizing imperatives, only variably achieving such goals.

For Charles H. Kerr & Company, "the most significant publisher of Marxian socialism in the United States before World War I," advertising was off-limits due to the moral hypocrisy of a radical publication accepting it, but raising capital was not (Ruff, 1997: 83). Instead of using advertising, Kerr raised capital by using "stock, bond, and other fund-raising and investment strategies that tapped the good will, commitment, and socialist faith of the movement they served" (Ruff, 1997: xvii)—for example, through numerous stock offerings, and through bond offerings that paid a 6 percent annual return as well as made possible the purchase of Kerr publications at wholesale prices (Ruff, 1997: 67). Not only did this provide a source of capital, it subsidized the cost of books, making them as affordable as possible and boosting sales and the strength of the hoped-for socialist movement (Ruff, 1997: 54).

For J.A. Wayland and the *Appeal to Reason*, the largest-circulation socialist newspaper ever to appear in the United States, advertising was not shunned, but sought as the primary source of capital (Shore, 1985: 148). In the shadow of the huge financial success of mass-circulation newspapers such as the *New York Journal* and the *New York World*, the reigning "models for the radical press to follow while seeking to develop a large audience sometimes came from the successful mainstream press." Wayland did just this after trying reader contributions, party support, organizing as a co-operative, and donations from wealthy benefactors, and finding them all wanting (Shore, 1985: 148). Confronted with these choices, Wayland "came to the conclusion that a [financially] solvent paper could only be produced through 'sound' business practices." The goal of producing a "solvent paper" was not a egotistic one necessarily; business success was assumed to confirm the validity of the message and the viability of the social movement (Shore, 1988: 2). By 1902, circulation reached and passed 200,000, reaching a peak prior to W.W.I of more than 750,000 (Bekken 1993: 158).

Wayland justified these measures as necessary for building the production capacity needed to reach enough readers with the socialist message. As he put it in a January 1903 issue, "'The day has gone by for small mediums [*sic*] to tackle great undertakings, and we must prepare to propagate Socialism in just the proportions that Capitalism operates'" (Shore, 1985: 158). The biggest step toward this was to professionalize newsgathering by replacing the lower-cost option of commenting on capitalist news with the hiring of its own reporters and going full-steam into "the news business," running only "exclusive stories brought in by the *Appeal*'s own staff." The reorganized *Appeal* commissioned and ran serially Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* (Sinclair, 1906) and published original stories on political corruption, the Mexican Revolution, strikes and child-labor abuses, and the murder trial of "Big" Bill Haywood and other members of the Western Federation of Miners, the last of which it turned into what Shore calls a "cause celebré" (Shore, 1985: 164-165).

Despite their initial success, both Kerr's and Wayland's efforts suffered due to changing historical conditions such as the retrenchment of socialist politics in the wake of assassinations blamed on anarchists, the collapse of European socialism on the eve of World War I, and the domestic repression of socialist publications during the war primarily through the loss of their postal privileges (Shore 1985: 163-165; Shore 1988: 208-226; Ruff 1997: 176-199; Bekken 1991). One could conclude that the corporatizing strategy made them more rather than less susceptible to these pressures.

Additional limitations to these ventures arose as a result of the practiced division between producers and consumers, which affected how members of each group saw themselves, and their relationship to the movement and to each other. Critics today of the mass-culture perspective point out the difficulty of conceiving a "mass" basis for popular social movements—and what some have called the arrogance of attempting to do so (Boggs 1993; Trend 1993; Moore 1997), but such an insight isn't a late-20th Century invention. Both Kerr and Wayland felt at the time that the relationship of passive, individual "reader" produced by mainstream, institutionalized media worked exceedingly well with the mainstream political aim of fragmenting alternative social movements and thereby preserving the status quo. They therefore hoped to, in Ruff's words, "erase distinctions between press and reader"—an ideological mainstay of the mainstream, commercial press, with its erasure the only hope of building a mass social movement composed of and responsive to its participants, and egalitarian in its design (Ruff, 1997: xvii). Yet, as long as "mass" forms of media and the corresponding capital-intensive, professionalized form of organization were deemed necessary, hopes for achieving such goals remained limited. Although Kerr converted in later years to a less "massified" view of popular movements, his organization (as did Wayland's) remained corporatized, professionalized, and generally closed to meaningful popular participation.

Despite the reliance on corporatized forms of media represented by Kerr and Wayland, a third example of experimentation in alternative media included a number of radical publications that sought to open their pages more fully to popular contributions (Ferrell 1991; Bekken 1993). Some of them worked from conceptions of media and society quite different than the mass-culture perspective, such as in the efforts of the Western Federation of Miners and, later, the Industrial Workers of the World under the leadership of Bill Haywood. For Haywood, the source of class consciousness is not an essay in a newspaper, but in the experience of repression. Organizing was therefore a practical necessity driven by conditions rather than simply a political choice. In this way, Haywood replaced a vanguardist theory of political movements and a corresponding mass-culture theory of alternative media with a theory of both based in industrial unionism. Haywood felt his role in the Western Federation of Miners was not to direct the movement, but to encourage "long-distance handshaking" between its members by sending them frequent bulletins of strikes, asking for information about member unions, and soliciting pictures of the strikers, union halls, and demonstrations to be reprinted in the federation's magazine (Haywood 1929: 153-154).

In addition to the union magazine, Haywood used as needed many other media such as conventions, speeches, and informal talk, with newspapers and magazines of secondary importance. In addition, flyers and posters ("circulars") were often used in specific situations to solidify immediate resistance. Such media were also conducive to less expository, more conceptual kinds of forms. For example, during a mining strike in Colorado, and following the public statement by the general of the Colorado state militia "to hell with the Constitution...we are following the orders of [Colorado] Governor Peabody," Haywood created a poster with the headline "To Hell With the Constitution," with parts of the Constitution "that had been violated by the soldiers and authorities of Colorado" reprinted below it. A second poster during the same situation (described by Haywood as his "desecrated flag poster") consisted of a "rough picture of the United States flag, with the caption at top, 'Is Colorado in America?'" On each stripe of the flag was a line noting the illegal actions of the state militia, such as "Martial Law declared in Colorado," and "Habeas Corpus Suspended in Colorado" (Haywood 1929: 140-141). What is notable about these and other efforts is not only their immediate relation to conditions, but the fact that a person of Haywood's limited skills (although a skilled orator, he was no graphic designer) could assemble them by reframing resonant cultural resources through juxtaposition with other images or phrases, with the result of critically exposing contradictions and the actual nature of actions taken against the union.

Techniques of reproduction have changed drastically in the 20th Century, and sporadic innovation in terms of cultural form has continued, building upon the experiments of ventures such as those run by Kerr, Wayland, and Haywood. To a large extent, the development of the underground press in the U.S. during the 1960s was assisted by the emergence of colloquial processes of reproduction, which made it possible for ink-on-paper drawings and typewritten copy (within the reach of most people) to be the basis for reproduction. It also made possible the greater availability of less-expensive printing equipment to printers who were either indifferent to or active participants in the movement. Although still requiring time, training, and commitment typical of corporatized media, the possibility grew of popular participation in the practice of underground media, as did the emergence of different kinds of forms for representing and solidifying the movement. While the invention of offset printing and the resulting lesser cost of reproduction was important, practitioners also developed a distinctive visual form for representing the tone and feel of the movement (Glessing 1970: 39-49; Lewis 1972).

Today, an even more democratic technology of reproduction is the photocopier, which, together with the development of new forms of media such as 'zines, continue in important ways toward the development of more democratic alternative media (Barnard 1996). Yet, as the following brief survey illustrates, they remain peripheral to the mass-produced, vanguardist forms of alternative media and traditional forms of content that best fit their structural requirements and institutional imperatives.

Socially speaking, the least liberating form of media activism perpetuated today is to become more "media-friendly." Although handbooks such as Salzman (1998) list and explain ways to attempt to get one's cause covered by mainstream news organizations, they neglect the problem of relying solely upon such a strategy. For example, Turner (1980) describes the pitfalls of attempts by feminists to gain coverage in mainstream news, in that feminist politics became more susceptible to incorporation and neutralization in part by having to conform to mainstream media formulas. Gitlin (1980) and many others note similar outcomes for other movements.

Although public broadcasting has its vocal supporters, its ability to serve as an alternative is also limited. In his examination of the development of public broadcasting in the U.S., Engleman (1996: 285-307) argues for access, diversity, and independence from private funding—laudable goals, but leaving unquestioned the corporatized, professionalized definition of public broadcasting, which casts doubt on just how participatory such a practice can be. In an analysis of working-class media, Denning (1990: 15) makes just this point, noting that "the great paradox of film and broadcasting" is, on one hand, "the genuine democratization of cultural audiences," but on the other, the fact that it requires "such large capital investment and technical training as to have restricted greatly [popular participation in] the production of films and broadcasts."

Examples of alternative media from labor, feminist, and other movements constitute significant efforts. Yet they continue to be hampered by the chosen, traditional mode of organization, which perpetuates the separation of media workers from their popular base, the encouragement of a consumerist relationship, and the increased difficulty of building means of direct participation.

An example of an organizational alternative is the Women's Feature Service, the "first intentionally organized effort to interrupt global news practices that had historically ignored and marginalized women's concerns and achievements" (Byerly 1995: 118). The promise of "woman-controlled news agencies [becoming] viable in the competitive world of global newsmaking" cannot be dismissed (118). However, it maintains the distinction between producers of this programming and those who are objects of it or those who simply consume such stories. Other, similar attempts also overlook how this form assists fragmentation of a social movement (Santa Cruz 1995). More broadly speaking, van Zoonen (1994: 49-62) and Valdivia (1995: 22) warn of the voluntarist fallacy of automatically assuming that control of media by women means a complete break with traditional forms of media and communication, if what is practiced remains a professionalized form. Similarly high hopes about the capability of the Internet must be tempered by facts of its technologically intensive nature and incorporation into commercial media organizations (*Monthly Review* 1996).

Examples of popular music as a means of political organizing must also be viewed in a broader context. Instead of automatically assuming that, if a kind of music is popular, it therefore constitutes a significant political achievement, one must also inquire into the kinds of social relations practiced by and through it. For example, compared to the popular adoption of reggae as an expression of Rastafarian culture and its complex role in solidifying notable political resistance in Jamaica (Hall 1985), commercialized, philanthropic "mega-events" such as Live-Aid operate primarily if not solely on the professional-producer/consumer distinction and therefore amount to a paltry substitute for a vibrant political movement (Garofalo 1992).

Other examples constitute important forms of participation, yet they still rely upon capital- and knowledge-intensive equipment and production. For example, Rodriguez (1996) describes a video project conducted in rural areas of Latin America, one of many such projects since 1984. Funded by UNESCO, it sought to put "electronic media in the hands of citizens and communities who traditionally had been denied access to the production and distribution of media messages" (63). The result of these and many similar efforts was to provide a means by which accepted worldviews could be revealed, challenged, and perhaps remade. Huesca (1995) describes the operation of a radio system run by miners in Bolivia that seeks similar goals. Yet, the need for training and capital-intensive equipment to practice this form introduces by necessity the characteristic social division of producer/consumer. And even though hand-held camcorder technology is an important condition making possible AIDS TV, such productions still require large amounts of time for writing, shooting, and editing. In addition, only recently are questions being raised not just about the cost of techniques, but also about the aesthetics of alternative media and how to enable social movements through participatory cultural forms (Juhasz 1995).

Alternatives to alternative media

Problems of alternative media today are often posed as lack of money, participation, and general commitment. Yet, these are better seen as symptoms of more basic problems of how media production is organized, which cultural forms are employed, and the social implications of both. Due to this complexity, alternatives to professionalized, capital-intensive forms of alternative media and their divisive social effect are difficult to conceive, let alone put into practice.

Examples of vanguardist and/or professionalized alternative media point out their limitation, which Sparks notes in a well-mannered critique of Williams' project. Despite his trenchant critiques, Williams nevertheless still saw a public-service system as a large, corporatized organization. Television, motion pictures, theater, newspapers, books, and magazines could not be simply individual projects, he felt, due primarily to the scale of investment required (Williams 1967: 166). He therefore proposed various organizational means to maintain as open a process as possible, such as having producers rather than bureaucrats govern production facilities, creating independent production companies with no interlocking financial ties with distributors or institutional pressures to maximize viewership, and institutionalizing media education "in order to equip people with an understanding of the ways in which media messages were produced and how they could be understood" (Sparks 1993: 82).

As useful and powerful as Williams' conception is of a public-service model of communication, two issues remain. Given the current lack of such a system and the degree to which the dominant system is entrenched, how might the political means be made to assist the emergence of such a system? And, granted that large-scale, capital-intensive media projects are indeed a relevant and important means of communication, what else might be done to more thoroughly achieve broad participation in alternative media and communication outside these capital-intensive forms?

As Sparks notes, although Williams' analysis and resulting proposals are important, they nevertheless remain unfinished due to their not grappling fully with these questions.

> The problems and possibilities of emergent systems of communication are quite different to those of dominant systems, and their chances of approximating to democratic communication seem to me very much greater. If we accept, as Williams did, that the existing media system is the product of a deeply undemocratic social

> order, then it seems logical to look for democratic communication in those emergent forms, however marginal and struggling they may be at any given time, rather than to propose schemes for tinkering with the existing order (Sparks 1993: 84-85).

To takes Sparks' point a bit further: The problem of alternative media is not where and how to find the money to build capital-intensive mirror images of mainstream media or noncommercial but still professionalized modes, but of creating and putting into practice forms of communication that constitute a fully alternative practice. Such forms should have barriers to participation—such as time, distance, money, and training—as low as possible. They should strive for an everyday, spontaneous, noncorporate mode of organization that requires little if any capital outlay. In addition, they should be a part of other realms of life instead of divorced from them. Open participation and the use of a variety of forms would enable such inclusion, thereby helping breach the division between producers and consumers, and becoming popular means of cultural organizing and exploration instead of individualized media products to consume (Downing 1984: 156, 351-354.)

If such working propositions for alternative were adopted, the question of access to capital as well as the problems associated with institutionalization (Hochheimer 1993) would not only be minimized, but made irrelevant. The resulting task for the practice of alternative media is to see the reciprocal relationships between technical requirements, sources of funding, and cultural form, and therefore to detect means of building alternative political movements. Of particular importance is to refuse to automatically assume a corporatized, professionalized, capital-intensive form, and to seek other ways for more people to practice truly popular forms of communication.

When understood in this way, more colloquial kinds of emergent alternative-media practices can be suggested. Concrete examples remain difficult to find and to study, because they leave few institutional traces (such as being collected in libraries). Yet examples still exist, such as the way in which people incorporate mass-produced images and text into their own bulletin-board ensembles (Berger 1972: 30). While public in only a limited way, the kernel of this practice—creative incorporation of other images for one's own use—has been often expanded in a more explicitly public way.

An example is the project cultural critic Stuart Ewen embarked upon in the early 1980s. Self-titled "BILLBOARDS of the FUTURE" (capitals original), Ewen saw it as "initially a defensive response to the closing wall of conservatism" in the early years of the Reagan presidency. Instead of trying to establish a newspaper or a newsletter, shoot a video, or establish a radio program, Ewen settled on letter-sized graph paper, scissors, rubber cement, old magazines and newspapers, and other cut-and-paste tools of informal layout. Using these, he assembled critiques of this conservatism—mostly visual, sometimes with accompanying words—by highlighting its contradictions. For example, the first product was composed from a campaign poster depicting a smiling Ronald Reagan, encased within heavy black "funereal" border and accompanied by the words "Big Brother is Watching You! 1984" (Ewen 1986: 249-250).

Ewen chose a similarly low-capital, simple means of reproduction and distribution: photocopying and mailing copies to friends, relatives, and acquaintances, then distributing the rest on the street or putting them up around the neighborhood. Further reproduction through photocopying was easy and encouraged, and "friendship networks" became the means of wider distribution. When Ewen publicly identified himself as the author of the previously anonymous BILLBOARDS and took out a post-office box address for related correspondence, he "received so much mail [about them] that I could barely answer it all." BILLBOARDS showed up in cities across the United States, and in England, France, Italy, Holland, Greece, Southern Africa, and China. Of perhaps more importance was their appearance in workplaces, such as one BILLBOARD that depicted a " 'QUARANTINE' sign with one of those round, smiling faces [...] warning of exposure to the 'EMOTIONAL PLAGUE'," which was posted by Long Island Lighting Company employees in a power plant (Ewen 1986: 241-242).

What needs to be noted is the fit between the chosen mode of production (cut-and-paste existing material, photocopying, postal mailings), and the form Ewen found most suitable in which to work, which showed up not only in the posters Haywood created, but also in early 20th-Century avant-garde artistic movements. For example, the technique of photomontage as practiced by John Heartfield in mid-1930s Germany critiqued notions of Nazi "progress" by depicting it as decline, thereby critiquing the dominant by negating the very terms it used to legitimize itself (Buck-Morss 1989: 60-63). Montage using dominant media as raw material re-emerged in the U.S. underground press of the 1960s (where Ewen had first learned it), in such ways as using standard advertising formats that "promoted" napalm (Ewen 1986: 251-252; Lewis 1972: 76). As Ewen explains, BILLBOARDS "evoked and appealed to generally understood modes of communication, yet *at the same time* offered a critical commentary, designed to explode the perspective of the vested interests while raising the possibility that media and art can be used as vehicles of human possibility and liberation" (Ewen 1986: 252-253).

In this way, dominant forms and images become "a resource to be exploited" through montage and juxtaposition—achieving a critique not through a laborious analytic essay or flashy, professional graphic design but through a cut-and-paste form well within the reach of general practice. People don't need money, professional training, or lots of time to practice this form of alternative media—just the ability to see how to use dominant images against themselves. The BILLBOARDS project is an example of an alternative to alternative media not only in its resolutely low-capital nature, but in its implicit invitation, "silently conveyed by the obviousness and simplicity of production…[that] 'You can do this too! Try it!'" In this way, "alternative messages were combined with a politics of popular expression" (Ewen 1986: 253).

As should be clear from Ewen's project and these limited examples, such alternatives to alternative media are still very much "small potatoes" (Ewen 1986: 257), and, as such, fit very well Sparks' characterization of emergent forms of communication as "marginal and struggling." The value of these and other examples is not in their organizational size, circulation, or immediate, individual effect, which in the larger scheme of things is quite slight (Downing 1984: 352, 356). Rather, their collective value is in their exploration of new forms of organizing more participatory forms of communication. As Ewen notes, "they have given me a better sense of how popular, spontaneous, participatory media might take shape" (1986: 258).

What matters to political movements today is how alternative media are organized and how they might organize social movements through innovations in cultural form. This doesn't mean that alternative media should not engage in extended analyses of inequities in society nor be practiced in professionalized, corporatized forms, just that the limitations of such a mode of organizing alternative media be foregrounded and taken seriously. It also means that more effort should be taken to help produce a new kind of "audience, with new expectations, open to experimenting with new ways of seeing"—but an audience that at the same time produces its own (Daressa 1987: 8). Such popular, participatory forms and practices can help individuals see themselves, their relationships to others, and possibilities for change in a new light and with renewed hope. They should aspire not only to awards banquets for investigative journalism or artistic sophistication, or industry recognition for innovation in graphic design, but also to widespread postings in workplaces, appearances on bulletin boards in supermarkets, and regular display in other everyday venues. Only in such ways might an alternative to alternative media fully begin to flourish.

NOTES

[1] Quoted from Altschull 1990.

[2] Williams (1958).

[3] This debate took place on the Campus Alternative Journalism electronic-mail list, which is facilitated by the Center for Campus Organizing, a non-profit national clearinghouse based in Cambridge, Mass. Members of this list write for, edit, publish, or in other ways assist the emergence and operation of 100-odd alternative newspapers, newsletters, and magazines, most of which are based on U.S. college and university campuses (Huber 1998).

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A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF NEWS COVERAGE OF THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF GENETIC TESTING

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By David A. Craig

Assistant Professor
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of Oklahoma
860 Van Vleet Oval, Room 120-B
Norman, OK 73019-0270
Phone: (405) 325-5206
E-mail: dcraig@ou.edu

ABSTRACT:

A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF NEWS COVERAGE OF THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF GENETIC TESTING

Using ethical theory as an analytical lens, this paper assesses news coverage of the ethical implications of genetic testing through an in-depth textual analysis of 31 broadcast and print stories by major news organizations in 1995 and 1996. Consequentialist concerns, especially avoidance of harm, were prominent in most stories, but deontological references were often lacking. Ethical themes, sometimes emerging as direct questions to readers, underlined the choices facing individuals and society.

A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF NEWS COVERAGE OF THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF GENETIC TESTING

Scientific knowledge of genetic links to disease is growing at a staggering pace against the backdrop of the Human Genome Project, an international effort to map all human genes.[1] Discoveries in the past several years include genes linked to diseases such as breast cancer and Alzheimer's that affect millions of people. Closely following some of these discoveries has been the development of tests to determine whether people carry the genes. However, the tests can present people with extraordinarily difficult choices because, in most cases, those who test positive remain unsure whether they will get the disease. They often face the prospect of a lack of available treatment if they do test positive, and of possible insurance problems or job discrimination. The tests, therefore, present difficult ethical choices for individuals. On the organizational and professional levels, they raise questions of ethical obligation on the part of health care professionals and test developers, among others. The public importance of these issues for professionals, laypeople, and policymakers points to a need for effective news coverage -- and for information to help journalists begin to develop standards for this coverage.

This paper assesses news coverage of the ethical implications of genetic testing in 31 stories or sidebars by major news organizations in 1995 and 1996 -- 12 pieces from broadcast and 19 from print. The analytical framework for this qualitative evaluation is grounded in the deontological and consequentialist perspectives of ethical theory.

Ethical issues have been a recognized priority within the Human Genome Project. The genome project's primary funders, the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Energy, have designated part of their genome project budgets for research on the ethical, legal, and social implications of the project. This funding has supported numerous books.[2]

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[1] For an overview of the project, see "The Human Genome Project" [World Wide Web document] (The National Human Genome Research Institute, National Institutes of Health, accessed 17 March 1998); available from http://www.nhgri.nih.gov/HGP; Internet.

[2] M. Susan Lindee, "The ELSI Hypothesis," Isis 85 (1994): 293-96. Among the books are

The project is notable for its attempt to explore these implications at the same time the research is proceeding, not after it is complete. Thomas H. Murray writes that the ELSI program, as it is called, "occupies a unique place in the history of science: it is the first major scientific initiative to include from its inception a commitment to systematically exploring the ethical, legal, and social issues it raises."[3] Because the genome project carries widely acknowledged ethical implications, genetic testing is a particularly appropriate topic for a critical examination of the quality of major news organizations' portrayal of the ethical dimension of news.

Literature Review[4]

An in-depth critical evaluation of this coverage is also appropriate because of the absence of systematic, theoretically grounded assessments of coverage of the ethical dimension of news involving professions and society. Despite the importance of professions in the lives of individuals and society, a review of the literature evaluating coverage of ethics in general, and the ethical dimension of medicine and intersecting

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George J. Annas and Sherman Elias, eds., Gene Mapping: Using Law and Ethics As Guides (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Daniel J. Kevles and Leroy Hood, eds., The Code of Codes: Scientific and Social Issues in the Human Genome Project (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Mark S. Frankel and Albert Teich, eds., The Genetic Frontier: Ethics, Law, and Policy (Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1994); and Timothy F. Murphy and Marc A. Lappe, eds., Justice and the Human Genome Project (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[3] Thomas H. Murray, "Speaking Unsmooth Things about the Human Genome Project," in Annas and Elias, 250.

[4] This literature review is adapted from a previously presented paper focusing on development of a method for critiquing ethics coverage, David A. Craig, "A Theoretical Framework for Evaluating News Coverage of Ethics in Professions and Society" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics, Dallas, Texas, 26-28 February 1998).

professions[5] in particular, shows an absence of broad studies of news coverage that are systematically grounded in ethical theory.

A growing interest among media scholars in coverage of ethics was evident in the March 1995 conference on "The Reporting of Ethics and the Ethics of Reporting," held in Crystal City, Va., in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics. The conference included panels and discussion about reporting on values, ethics, religion, and policy -- as well as the profession of journalism itself. However, published evaluations of news coverage of ethics across the professions are lacking. A 1993 paper by Debra Mason[6] did provide a preliminary investigation of the state of ethics coverage nationwide. She concluded that "the nation's daily newspapers do little actual coverage of ethics as a beat or as an aspect of stories on other beats" -- whether the subject is ethics in "other disciplines" or media ethics.[7] At the same time, however, she found through a preliminary analysis of newspapers that this might be slowly changing. Mason found one area in which ethics is a frequent topic -- coverage of government -- but the articles primarily focused on "fiscal misdeeds" of politicians.[8]

In the area of medicine and related professional activity, ethics has been in the background and occasionally the foreground of critical evaluation of coverage by mass media scholars and journalists, but it has not received broad, systematic attention. Coverage has also received critical attention from the medical community, including medical ethicists, in areas such as publicized organ donations.

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[5] "Intersecting professions" are defined here as professions whose activity includes work that affects the direction and practice of medicine and health care, and the constraints on that practice. Among the intersecting professions are scientific research, business, law and public policy, and counseling.

[6] Debra L. Mason, "Covering Ethics: Evidence of Its Emergence as a Beat and an Argument for Its Inclusion as News" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Kansas City, Missouri, August 1993).

[7] Ibid., 2.

[8] Ibid., 11.

In media studies literature, William Oates did make a systematic attempt to assess ethical content of news coverage.[9] He focused on a year's newsmagazine coverage of heart transplantation beginning with Dr. Christiaan Barnard's operation in 1967. Using a semantic content analysis method borrowed from Irving Janis, he found that social and ethical content rose and fell with the amount of hard news coverage and was generally not followed by additional social and ethical content.

More recently, literature on risk communication[10] has touched directly and indirectly on ethics. For example, in examining coverage of the greenhouse effect, Lee Wilkins concluded that news stories emphasized science, not values, and she pointed to the need for coverage of the moral dimension of scientific issues.[11] And in assessing coverage of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, Wilkins and Philip Patterson found that no comprehensive analysis was made of the social system and context surrounding the disaster.[12]

Professional journalism reviews, including most of the Winter 1993 Nieman Reports,[13] have evaluated health and medical coverage and touched on the ethical dimension. Dorothy Nelkin has warned of hyped coverage of genetic research advances.[14]

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[9] William R. Oates, "Social and Ethical Content in Science Coverage by Newsmagazines," Journalism Quarterly 50 (Winter 1973): 680-84.

[10] Among the broader works in this area are Bad Tidings: Communication and Catastrophe, ed. Lynne Masel Walters, Lee Wilkins, and Tim Walters (Hillside, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989); Risky Business: Communicating Issues of Science, Risk, and Public Policy, ed. Lee Wilkins and Philip Patterson, with a foreword by Dorothy Nelkin (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991); and Stephen Klaidman, Health in the Headlines: The Stories Behind the Stories (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[11] Lee Wilkins, "Between Facts and Values: Print Media Coverage of the Greenhouse Effect, 1987-1990," Public Understanding of Science 2 (1993): 71-84.

[12] Lee Wilkins and Philip Patterson, "Risk Analysis and the Construction of News," Journal of Communication 37 (summer 1987): 80-92.

[13] "Covering Health Issues," Nieman Reports 47, no. 4 (Winter 1993).

[14] Dorothy Nelkin, "Covering Gene Therapy: Beware the Hype," Quill 84 (September 1996): 34-37.

Other topics in recent years have included AIDS coverage,[15] science writers' uncritical acceptance of research reports,[16] unbalanced media coverage of the silicone breast implant controversy,[17] lack of early coverage of government radiation experimentation[18] and more recently illnesses of Gulf War veterans,[19] and coverage of health care reform.[20] All of these topics are matters of both journalistic ethics and journalistic coverage of ethics.

Victor Cohn, who covered science, medicine, and health during 25 years at The Washington Post, has urged long-term journalistic attention to the cost and organization of the health care system. Cohn also warns that medical coverage can "have unintended societal effects," such as potentially shifting money toward highly publicized organ transplants and away from immunizations.[21] Cohn says that science and medical coverage "is far better than ever," and not just at large newspapers. "Medical reporters are more conscious of the ethical and economic implications of their reporting."[22] However, he contends, "There is still too much extolling of new medical miracles without a count of the money or other impact. And there's frequently a medical tear-jerker with no broader context."[23] He points to the danger of raising "patients' expectations beyond the possible" and of focusing on extremes ("New Hope and No Hope"). He also contends that television is generally "far behind the best print media in maturity, with most of its medical reports mere short bursts."[24] Gary J. Schwitzer cites a 1989 survey of medical reporters by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation which found these reporters chose stories about new drugs and treatments over "stories on ethical issues in health care, health care policy, or access to care."[25]

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[15] Daniel Lynch, "AIDS: The No. 11 Killer," Washington Journalism Review 14 (January-February 1992): 19-21; and Jonathan Kwitney, "Bad Medicine: How the Media Helped the Medical Establishment Cast Doubt on Innovative Approaches to Fighting AIDS," Washington Journalism Review 15 (January-February 1993): 40-45. See also Tom Cooper, "Double Invasion: The Ethics of Communication About Communicable Diseases," Media Ethics 6 (spring 1994): 6.

[16] John Crewdson, "'Perky Cheerleaders,'" Nieman Reports 47 (winter 1993): 11-16.

[17] Elinor J. Brecher, "Bucking the Media Line on Breast Implants," Nieman Reports 48 (spring 1994): 50-52.

[18] Geoffrey Sea, "The Radiation Story No One Would Touch," Columbia Journalism Review 32 (March-April 1994): 37-40; and Debra A. Durocher, "Radiation Redux," American Journalism Review 16 (March 1994): 34-37.

[19] Kate McKenna, "Missed Story Syndrome," American Journalism Review 19 (May 1997): 22-30.

[20] Trudy Lieberman, "Covering Health Care Reform, Round One: How One Paper Stole the Debate," Columbia Journalism Review 32 (September-October 1993): 33-35; "Challenge of Covering Health Care Issues," Editor and Publisher, 29 January 1994, 30 (from a roundtable discussion with medical reporters led by Victor Cohn); Robert J. Blendon, "Health-Care Reform: The Press Failed to Inform Public of Alternatives," Nieman Reports 49 (fall 1995): 17-19.

[21] Victor Cohn, "Corrective Surgery," Quill 80 (November-December 1992): 17-18.

[22] Victor Cohn, "We've Come a Long Way Since Covering Blue Cross," Nieman Reports 47

Professional, as well as scholarly, journalism literature thus sometimes highlights the ethical dimension that is often unaddressed in news coverage. Still, this literature has not explored ethical issues systematically and in-depth.

Publications outside the realm of media studies also have addressed the ethical dimension of news coverage. A topic that has received repeated attention is news coverage of "spectacular" medical cases such as artificial-heart transplants and children needing organ donations.[26] Critics have raised questions of resource allocation related to highly

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(winter 1993): 4.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 4-5. Cohn's concerns are echoed in Rae Goodell, "Problems with the Press: Who's Responsible?" BioScience 35 (March 1985): 151-57.

[25] Gary J. Schwitzer, "Doctoring the News: Miracle Cures, Video Press Releases, and TV Medical Reporting," Quill 80 (November-December 1992): 20. More recently, Herman Blumenthal criticized the news media for neglecting the social justice aspect of corporate domination of health care in "Media Wrongly Deifies Free Market Solutions," St. Louis Journalism Review 26 (July-August 1996): 11. Carol Gentry encouraged reporters to investigate health maintenance organizations in "The Next Round of Health Care Hotspots," Columbia Journalism Review 34 (July-August 1995): 48.

[26] Lynn Cohen and Peter P. Morgan, "Medical Dramas and the Press: Who Benefits from the Coverage?" Canadian Medical Association Journal 139, no. 7 (1 October 1988): 657-61; and William C. DeVries, "The Physician, the Media, and the 'Spectacular' Case," Journal of the American Medical Association 259 (12 February 1988): 886-90.

publicized cases.[27] Eike-Henner W. Kluge points to ethical problems from public organ-donation appeals.[28]

A more extensive ethical analysis of news coverage came from Stephen Klaidman and Tom L. Beauchamp. They performed a content analysis of news coverage of the case of Baby Jane Doe, born in 1983 with serious disabilities including spina bifida and microcephaly.[29] Right-to-life advocates had challenged in court the parents' desire not to pursue surgery aimed at prolonging the child's life; the Justice Department intervened after a court ruling that the parents had the right to decide their child's treatment.[30] Klaidman and Beauchamp examined coverage by the national TV networks, the New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and Wall Street Journal, and Time and Newsweek; they compared this coverage with Newsday's Pulitzer Prize-winning work as a "benchmark."[31] They concluded that "overall inadequate attention was paid to the medical, legal, philosophical and social implications of the case" by the other news organizations.[32] Klaidman and Beauchamp point to eight key questions or groups of questions that the national press left nearly untouched -- several of them with an ethical dimension. For example:

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[27] Eugene V. Boisaubin, "Charity, the Media, and Limited Medical Resources." Journal of the American Medical Association 259 (4 March 1988): 1375-76; and Phil Gunby, "Media-abetted Liver Transplants Raise Questions of 'Equity and Decency'," Journal of the American Medical Association 249 (15 April 1983): 1973-74, 1980-82.

[28] Eike-Henner W. Kluge, "Designated Organ Donation: Private Choice in Social Context," Hastings Center Report 19, no. 5 (September-October 1989): 10.

[29] Stephen Klaidman and Tom L. Beauchamp, "Baby Jane Doe in the Media," Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law 11, no. 2 (Summer 1986): 271-84.

[30] Kathleen Kerr, the lead reporter for Pulitzer Prize-winning coverage by Newsday, discussed how the coverage developed in "Reporting the Case of Baby Jane Doe," Hastings Center Report 14 (August 1984): 7-9.

[31] Klaidman and Beauchamp, 271.

[32] Ibid.

> (5) What was the real basis for the parents' original decision to forgo life-lengthening surgery? Compassion for the child and/or fear of a life anchored to a severely handicapped child? The way in which doctors presented the options? Other reasons? (Perhaps there was no compassionate way to get the answers to those questions.)[33]

These questions relate to the ethical issues of parents' intentions and their consideration of consequences. Klaidman and Beauchamp's analysis shows how reporters could have covered a biomedical ethics case better. However, they appear to be the only scholars who have done this systematically -- and their work is brief and not explicitly framed by ethical theory.

The absence of broad, systematic assessment of ethics coverage exists despite the considerable scholarly interest in recent decades in normative press theory and media ethics. The literature of normative press theory,[34] by emphasizing journalism's responsibility to society, has implicitly highlighted the need for ethics coverage -- and thus for assessment of coverage. But this literature has not provided detailed guidance for either planning or evaluating coverage. The related body of literature in media ethics[35] has not broadly addressed coverage of ethics, either, focusing instead on journalists' own ethical practice.

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[33] Klaidman and Beauchamp, 274.

[34] Key works include Commission on Freedom of the Press, A Free and Responsible Press (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947); Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, Four Theories of the Press (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1956); Wilbur Lang Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communication (New York: Harper, 1957); William L. Rivers, Wilbur Schramm, and Clifford G. Christians, Responsibility in Mass Communication, 3d ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1980); and Clifford G. Christians, John P. Ferre, and P. Mark Fackler, Good News: Social Ethics and the Press (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[35] Among many relevant works are Edmund B. Lambeth, Committed Journalism: An Ethic for the Profession, 2d ed. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1992); Clifford G. Christians et al., Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning, 5th ed. (New York: Longman, 1998), Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins, Media Ethics: Issues and Cases, 3d ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998); Stephen Klaidman and Tom L. Beauchamp, The Virtuous Journalist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Method

Research advances associated with the Human Genome Project have been the backdrop for numerous broad pieces in the past several years in newspapers and newsmagazines about discovery of genes linked to some cancers, Alzheimer's, and other diseases -- and the development of tests for genetic predisposition to these diseases. News coverage, some mentioning ethics explicitly and some addressing it in other terms, has explored questions such as the impact of availability of tests related to incurable diseases such as Alzheimer's. Also examined have been possible insurance and employment problems, emotional trauma for families, and regulation or policies developed or discussed in light of these concerns.

Although news coverage began several years ago, only stories from 1995 and 1996 were analyzed to limit the case to articles that were relatively recent at the time of the analysis.[36] Articles by major U.S. news organizations (those with large circulations or audiences) were chosen because of the likelihood that, given the training of their staff members and the financial resources available to these organizations, they could be expected to provide a benchmark for the current state of ethics coverage, at least in the mainstream press.[37]

Thirty-one stories and sidebars were examined for this episode: two wire stories, 13 newspaper pieces (other than wire stories), four newsmagazine stories, eight network television pieces, and four National Public Radio stories. Two newspaper commentary pieces were included in this case because of their distinctive treatment of ethics. All of the stories analyzed in this case had a significant ethics component, explicitly stated or not, and were global in scope in that they at least touched on broad issues for individuals and society, rather than just reporting a news event. For example, they spent significant amounts of space or time portraying difficult choices created by the availability of genetic testing -- or examined potential benefits or harms that testing might create.[38]

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[36] The author's dissertation, of which this case study was a part, included interviews with reporters and editors who worked on some of the best stories and with ethics scholars who were story sources. For interview purposes, it was important to select stories likely to be recent enough for these journalists to recall the details of their work. See David A. Craig, "Covering the Ethics Angle: Toward a Method to Evaluate and Improve How Journalists Portray the Ethical Dimension of Professions and Society" (Ph.D. diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 1997).

[37] The topic of genetic testing was chosen through a Lexis/Nexis database search as well as informal reading of other stories. Text of the specific stories was obtained primarily through Lexis/Nexis but also through Dialog and Burrelle's broadcast news databases. Videotapes of the broadcast pieces were obtained from the Vanderbilt University Television News Archive.

The textual analysis addressed the following research question: How has the ethical dimension been evident in the content of coverage of genetic testing? More specifically, the following analytical question guided the critical reading of each story:

Does the story refer to or discuss the following issues? Little or none, some, or comprehensively?[39]

- Duties:
    - Faithfulness to commitments
    - Sensitivity to human needs
    - Sensitivity to autonomy of parties
    - Sensitivity to justice
- Consequences:
    - Avoiding harm
    - Doing good

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[38] About 80 relevant stories initially considered referred at least in passing to "ethics" or its cognate words along with genetic research, testing, or counseling -- or evidenced ethical content in other ways. The list of stories was narrowed for in-depth qualitative analysis to those that on a preliminary reading were found to deal most substantially and distinctively with the ethics of genetic testing. Additionally, some stories from early to mid-1995 were excluded to focus on stories that reporters would more likely recall in interviews.

[39] "Some," "little," and "comprehensive" were defined by story with recognition of the limitations imposed by space and time constraints and other factors. These categories were not used to rate coverage quantitatively on an enumerated hierarchy but rather to shape exploratory, qualitative textual analysis aimed at beginning to map the terrain of ethics coverage. The analytical question employed in this paper is one of several drawn from a theoretical framework for assessing ethics coverage developed and applied in the author's dissertation. See Craig, "Covering the Ethics Angle."

In addition, consideration was given to ethical questions and themes that do not fit neatly under the duty or consequence headings. Also considered was, more generally, the depth of treatment of ethical issues in an effort to provide a general picture of the comprehensiveness of treatment of ethics.

A variety of ethical perspectives could have been employed in this analysis. Gilligan's relationship-oriented feminist theory[40] is particularly relevant to difficult medical situations such as those created by genetic testing because of the impact of medical information and decisions on relationships.[41] However, the emphasis of this exploratory analysis on duty and consequences is in keeping with the significance of deontological and consequentialist perspectives in the history of ethical theory -- most notably, Kant and Mill -- and the continuing use of these perspectives in applied ethics.[42] In keeping with applied ethics as a whole, the specific ethical issues under these headings were derived from sources grounded in both philosophy and theology. Faithfulness to commitments and sensitivity to human needs were drawn from the Judeo-Christian love-based ethic as embodied in the work of Ramsey[43] and May.[44] The issues of autonomy, justice, avoiding harm (nonmaleficence), and doing good (beneficence) were drawn from the "principle-based, common-morality" theory of Beauchamp and Childress.[45] The principles from both theories reflect concerns of medical ethics but are also relevant to other professional fields.

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[40] Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[41] The author thanks an anonymous reviewer of this paper for noting the applicability of Gilligan to the analysis in this case.

[42] Both perspectives are cited, for example, in media ethics in Christians et al., Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning, 13-16. Lambeth argues for a mixed deontological framework that draws on both of these perspectives in Committed Journalism, 21-22. Both perspectives are cited in connection with medical ethics in the discussion of ethical theories in Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, Principles of Biomedical Ethics, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 47-62.

Given the semantic complexity of these ethical issues -- and the exploratory nature of the study of ethics coverage -- it was appropriate not to develop airtight categories for possible ways the stories would handle the issues, unlike in formal content analysis. The approach to story analysis used here has common ground with that of Ettema and Glasser, who have used detailed critical, qualitative analysis to assess the use of language in news texts.[46]

To lend rigor to the textual analysis, wording (whether words or whole sections) related to the analytical question was marked as the stories were read and reread. The marked text was then further analyzed for its ethical content in light of the concerns raised in the analytical question.

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[43] Paul Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950); Paul Ramsey, The Patient as Person: Explorations in Medical Ethics (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970).

[44] William F. May, The Patient's Ordeal (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1991). The love-based ethic applied in this framework has much in common with Gilligan's "ethic of care." She states that women's moral concern tends to include "[s]ensitivity to the needs of others and the assumption of responsibility for taking care" (Gilligan, In a Different Voice, p. 16), notions that are closely tied to the duties of sensitivity to human needs and faithfulness to commitments.

[45] Beauchamp and Childress, Principles of Biomedical Ethics, 100-109. Although avoiding harm and doing good appear as duties in Beauchamp and Childress, they are included instead under the consequentialist heading in this analysis because of the importance of benefits and harms in consequentialist ethics. It was determined that including them under both duty and consequence headings would have needlessly confused the analysis.

[46] James S. Ettema and Theodore L. Glasser, "Narrative Form and Moral Force: The Realization of Innocence and Guilt Through Investigative Journalism," Journal of Communication 38 (summer 1988): 8-26; Glasser and Ettema, "When the Facts Don't Speak for Themselves: A Study of the Use of Irony in Daily Journalism," Critical Studies in Mass Communication 10 (December 1993): 322-38; and Ettema and Glasser, "The Irony in -- and of -- Journalism: A Case Study in the Moral Language of Liberal Democracy," Journal of Communication 44 (spring 1994): 5-28.

Findings

The presentation of the textual analysis reflects the areas covered under the analytical question, in this order: deontological and consequentialist references, ethical questions and themes, and depth of treatment of ethical issues.

Deontological and consequentialist references

In nearly all instances, references to these categories of ethical concern were implied rather than stated directly as duties or obligations, or consequences. In addition, it was easier to spot material that was broadly deontological or consequentialist than it was to differentiate the individual issues such as autonomy or benefit included in this study's analytical question -- though consideration of specific issues did help shed light on some stories.

Analysis in light of the ethical categories listed above did clearly show that consequentialist concerns, especially avoidance of harm, were prominent in most stories. At the same time, deontological references, while evident in most stories, were lacking or absent in a significant number of the pieces.

Rick Weiss of the Washington Post provides a compelling example of presentation of potentially harmful consequences in the third and fourth paragraphs of a 2,200-word piece:

> New genetic tests are moving rapidly from research laboratories into doctors' offices, where they are being marketed as a way to predict people's chances of getting common diseases such as colon cancer, breast cancer and Alzheimer's disease.
>
> But instead of offering clear views of the future and strategies for altering it, genetic tests have raised the specters of DNA-based discrimination and loss of health insurance, and the prospect of people learning just enough to scare them but not enough to cure them.[47]

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[47] Rick Weiss, "Tests' Availability Tangles Ethical and Genetic Codes," Washington Post, 26 May 1996, sec. A, p. 1 (Final).

Without referring directly to consequences or harms, Weiss succinctly details potential negative consequences for people who get genetic tests. (At the same time, by pointing to concerns about discrimination, he also alludes to the deontological issue of justice.)

A story by Tim Friend of USA Today provides another scenario of potential harm, this time from testing for forms of the APOE gene linked to Alzheimer's:

> How many boomers will be tempted to check their APOE profile remains to be seen. But experts fear many are thinking as Wollin is.
>
> A recent survey by the Alzheimer's Association's New York chapter found that 63.8% of people would have the test done even if the results are not definitive.
>
> Experts are horrified at the prospect.
>
> "The problem with predictive testing is there is no treatment, nothing that can be done to affect or delay, or much less stop the onset of the disease" says medical ethicist Daniel Callahan, The Hastings Center, Briarcliff Manor, N.Y. "It is gaining knowledge with an utter incapacity about what to do with that knowledge."[48]

Friend goes on to cite a Swedish researcher who learned that a person who tested positive for another Alzheimer's-related gene attempted suicide despite having genetic counseling. With this narrative, he thus makes clear that getting a test, especially when nothing can be done to fight the disease, can have destructive consequences.

Likewise, to a significant degree, consequence and harm issues emerged in more than 20 other stories -- a large majority of those analyzed. Material that implied duties was also evident in most stories. However, deontological references were absent or only minimally present in a substantial number of stories (11). For example, a CBS Evening News piece by Wyatt Andrews explored concerns about genetic screening against the backdrop of Senate passage that day of a ban on insurance company access to genetic information.[49] It illustrated the problem through the story of a five-year-old boy who had been denied health insurance because he carries a gene that could cause heart failure. It also used as sources a Stanford University researcher who studied allegations of genetic discrimination; a woman from an advocacy group, the Council for Responsible Genetics; Francis Collins, head of the Human Genome Project; and two insurance industry sources. But the ethical thrust of the piece was nearly all in the direction of potential consequences and harms.

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[48] Tim Friend, "Looking for Alzheimer's: Test Identifies Gene but Can't Predict Disease," USA Today, 20 May 1996, sec. D, p. 1.

[49] Wyatt Andrews, news report, CBS Evening News, 23 April 1996.

Considerations of duty did emerge in numerous stories, however, and these references took in duties of both individuals and professionals. At the individual level, the manner in which some people expressed concern for the impact of testing on their families implied, while not directly stating, the specific duties of faithfulness to commitments and sensitivity to the needs of others. Examples abound of concern for impact on families. A National Public Radio story by Joe Palca[50] on a Michigan family's struggle with breast cancer and genetic testing for it was one of the most emotionally gripping. Women spoke extensively in the story in their own words about their feelings. One, portrayed under the pseudonym Susan, learned that she did not carry the genetic marker for breast cancer -- but that her nieces did. Her reaction portrayed her ethical concern:

> It was one thing, my sisters having inherited the gene, but it was quite another, my nieces, because I'll tell you, my nieces and nephews are like my own kids, and if there was any way that I could take that away from them, that pain, I'd just -- I just couldn't deal with it. I thought, "Why couldn't it be me," you know, "instead of them?" It was just devastating to find out that these young people were affected with this and that they had to worry about this and that they had to go through all this, and I think that's what hit everybody in the family worst.[51]

By using "Susan's" own words at length, Palca powerfully portrayed her commitment to her nieces and their needs. Or, stated in terms of Gilligan's theory,[52] he portrayed Susan's concern about relationships -- in light of the profound impact that genetic information can have on individuals and families.

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[50] Joe Palca, news report, All Things Considered, NPR, 29 June 1995.

[51] Palca, All Things Considered, 29 June 1995.

[52] Gilligan, In a Different Voice.

Although testing's impact on individual non-professionals -- and the public as a whole -- was a strong thread in many of the stories, about half of them at least implied duties on the part of professionals and institutions, including genetic testing companies, biotechnology firms, insurance companies, doctors, genetic counselors, and other health care professionals. They thus reached beyond the realm of medical ethics to the broader arena of professional ethics.

A particularly strong thread among stories is the need for the health care profession -- or other professions -- to provide genetic counseling. In Palca's story, "Janet," the sister of "Susan," points to this as a duty:

> Counseling has to be there, it has to be intact. You can't drop this in someone's lap and walk away and say, "Deal with it," because this is a lifetime commitment. If you're going to give this information to someone, you're going to have to be there for them for a lifetime, because we have only begun our journey through this, and we need people, we need professionals there to help us get through it, and so if this testing is going to be made public, there has to be some kind of a support system there for the family.[53]

In a less dramatic way, Alicia Shepard presents counseling as an implied ethical duty in an article on the need for clergy to become trained in genetic counseling:

> "There are only 1,200 genetic counselors in this country," says E. Virginia Lapham, co-director of the Human Genome Education Model Project, which is studying the psychological aspects of gene testing.
>
> "So social workers and pastors are going to have to do a lot of the counseling. I don't think they are at all prepared. Instead of being helpful, we are worried about untrained pastors being harmful."[54]

Although this story ran as a sidebar to another piece from Religion News Service on genetic testing, it, alone among the articles studied, explicitly developed the idea that pastors have an obligation to be ready to do genetic counseling. It thus explicitly reached beyond the health care professions to the duties of other professions as they relate to genetic testing.

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[53] Palca, All Things Considered, 29 June 1995.

[54] Alicia C. Shepard, "Many Who Will Be Asked to Do Genetic Counseling Are Unprepared," Cleveland Plain Dealer, 26 November 1995, sec. F, p. 4 (Final).

Similarly, articles that addressed the role of biotechnology firms, genetic testing companies, and insurance companies reached beyond medical ethics per se to at least touch on its nexus with business ethics. For example, an ABC story by George Strait, though too brief to do anything but lay out sides, described the debate over the ethics of profiting from research that grows out of genetic mapping. As Strait put it:

> The discovery is also an opportunity for private biotech firms to earn billions. Many will now be able to experiment with genes and patent or have exclusive rights to any of the drugs developed from those experiments. But protesters today at the Chicago Board of Trade and the New York Stock Exchange, where many of the biotech firms are traded, complained new treatments could involve altering DNA, and that it's wrong to profit from discoveries made from the blueprint for human life.[55]

Strait's story includes the response of biotech firms on consequentialist grounds -- the benefits of the research. However, the opponents' statement that profiting from the work is wrong implies that the firms have a duty not to seek to profit from some genetic research. Still, the nature of this duty, as the opponents may see it, is never developed.

Another piece by Strait on genetic discrimination is among a few that pointed to duties of insurance companies. He quotes a woman whose grandson was denied medical insurance because his mother had a genetic heart defect, then follows with a comment from George Annas, an expert on health law and ethics:

> DORIS GOLDMAN: Something is terribly wrong when a healthy little boy is denied health coverage based on genetic makeup.
>
> Prof. GEORGE ANNAS, Boston University: I believe we should have a very firm rule that no one looks at our genetic information without our informed consent and no one stores our DNA samples for future testing without our informed consent as well.[56]

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[55] George Strait, news report, ABC World News Tonight, 27 September 1995.

[56] George Strait, news report, ABC World News Tonight, 15 April 1996.

By including these comments, Strait points to a possible duty on the part of health insurance providers not to use genetic information (though an insurance industry representative in another story argued that it was unfair for insurers to be denied access to genetic information[57]).

Thus, while some of the stories analyzed leave matters of duty unaddressed or little developed, others point to duties at levels beyond the individual -- providing a treatment that, from a deontological standpoint, contains some significant nuances.

Ethical questions and themes

Along with including material that could be broadly categorized as deontological or consequentialist, the stories included elements that did not necessarily fit neatly into one category but did embody ethical themes -- that is, problems that can be addressed through moral reasoning.[58] These themes, sometimes stated as questions, confronted readers with the moral choices that arise from genetic counseling.

Four themes emerged as most prominent in the stories as a whole; each appeared in at least seven of the stories. These themes overlap, but they differ enough that they can be usefully discussed as distinct themes.

Theme 1. Whether you want to know your likely medical future. In some cases, as noted in an interview connected with this case,[59] the theme of knowing your future was stated with greater certainty than the probabilistic nature of the testing allows, but regardless, this theme figured prominently in several stories. And it was sometimes presented in tandem with Theme 2: what you would do with the information.

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[57] Palca, All Things Considered, 29 June 1995.

[58] Ethical themes in the stories appeared in individual phrases, questions or other sentences, or as threads running through a number of statements by the reporter or sources for the story. The sense of the term used here is modified from its use by bioethicist Arthur Caplan in a telephone interview by the author, 23 October 1996, and in personal communication, 15 December 1996. Although this is not a formal philosophical term, it emerged as useful during a related case study because it provides a way of assessing ethical content along lines other than explicitly philosophical duties or principles.

[59] Greg Sachs, assistant director, MacLean Center for Clinical Medical Ethics, University of Chicago, telephone interview by author, 19 May 1997.

Although not all stories that pointed to these themes stated them in terms of questions, several stories stated the first theme, or both, as questions that opened and therefore framed the story. Robert Bazell's NBC News overview on genetic testing opened with these words read by Tom Brokaw introducing the first theme:

> Tonight we take a look at genetic testing. If you could know you future, life or death, illness or health, good or bad, would you choose to know? Would you want your insurance company to know?[60]

Similarly, Brokaw began introducing Bazell's piece on breast cancer testing with these words, which introduced both themes:

> Time now for our regular Monday night Health Watch. Tonight, breast cancer, a new genetic test that can help predict a woman's risk. But would you want to know if your body contains a ticking time bomb? What would you do then?[61]

Because these stories are framed with questions of whether "you" would want to choose or know -- questions stated in the authoritative voice of the network anchor -- they bring these ethical themes strongly and directly to viewers.

Likewise, Palca's NPR piece on the Michigan family opened with these words from Robert Siegel, the host of All Things Considered:

> In the last few years, geneticists have learned how to predict the medical future for some patients, telling them whether they'll get cancer, for example. These tests are not widely used now, but they are expected to be -- soon. The question is, do people really want this kind of predictive information, and if they have it, what will they do with it?[62]

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[60] Robert Bazell, news report, NBC Nightly News, 6 July 1995.

[61] Robert Bazell, news report, NBC Nightly News, 22 January 1996.

[62] Palca, All Things Considered, 29 June 1995.

Although Palca did not present the questions in the second person -- he used "people" and "they" rather than "you" -- he still brings the themes to his audience in the form of a question, implying the need for the listener to consider an answer.

A newspaper commentary piece by Chicago Tribune columnist Barbara Brotman[63] also brought the themes to readers in question form. Its lead read this way:

> If your doctor could tell that you were likely to get Alzheimer's disease would you want to know? Would you live life to the fullest? Or would you crumble under the burden of that knowledge?

Brotman raises the theme of what you would do with the information in a particularly powerful way by raising the possible responses of living fully or crumbling because the knowledge was too much to handle.

Theme 2. What you would do with the information. As the examples under Theme 1 show, this theme followed logically from the question of whether you would want to know your likely medical future.

However, Diane Egner, a Tampa Tribune editorial writer, set out Theme 2 separately by stating specific questions that would connect with readers' own lives:

> To begin to understand the complexities of the situation, imagine being told that you carry a gene mutation indicative of the early onset of Alzheimer's disease.
>
> How would it change your lifestyle? Would you decide to pack 30 years of travel into 10? Would you retire early? Would you move closer to your children or grandchildren? Would you handle your finances differently or vow to lead a more moral life? Would you be angry, sad, disappointed or happy to know?[64]

Egner thus makes concrete some of the possible impacts that genetic information would have on a personal level.

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[63] Barbara Brotman, "The Genetic Dilemma: To Test or Not to Test," Chicago Tribune, 29 October 1995, Perspective, p. 1 (Chicagoland Final).

[64] Diane Egner, "Bitter Fruit," Tampa Tribune, 3 December 1995, Commentary, p. 1 (Metro).

Theme 3: The complexity of the choices people face because of developments in genetic testing. This theme overlaps with first two in that both Theme 1 (whether you want to know your likely medical future) and Theme 2 (what you would do with the information) dealt with difficult choices. But while at some points reporters presented questions reflecting actual choices (Themes 1 and 2), at other points through statements and stories they focused on the agonizing nature of the choices (Theme 3).

A story by Christine Gorman in Time stated that "Even with adequate information and advice, people can face exruciating dilemmas," citing the example of a woman's decision to have her colon removed because of genetic predisposition to colon cancer.[65] The theme of complexity of decisions also emerges in Diane Eicher's story in the Denver Post about another family's struggle over breast cancer testing. She described the difficulty this way:

> But the results of the test would have an impact that reached far beyond Katie's health. If she did have the mutation, then other female relatives in the family also would be at risk for it.
>
> Would her sister, Sharon, want to be tested? What about Sharon's teenage daughters?
>
> "My biggest concerns were my nieces if I were positive, then that means they're at increased risk," said Katie. "And they're too young to even have to be thinking about this." (Testing for the breast cancer gene usually isn't done on anyone under 18, said Arfa.)
>
> Knowing that a family carries a cancer gene could carry another price. If insurance companies that cover her relatives discovered the situation, would they provide coverage? If so, would rates skyrocket?
>
> Clearly, Katie's decision whether to have the test was problematic -- and momentous. And in the middle of this discussion, as Rae also watched her daughter fight breast cancer, she was frequently overcome with guilt and sadness.[66]

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[65] Christine Gorman, reported by J. Madeleine Nash, Alice Park, Dick Thompson, and Tara Weingarten, "The Doctor's Crystal Ball," Time, 10 April 1995, 60.

[66] Diane Eicher, "Genetic Tests: a Catch-22," Denver Post, 29 May 1996, sec. G, p. 1 (2d).

By weaving together statements about the situation in her own words with questions and quotes, Eicher showed readers the difficulty of this woman's decision -- and therefore pointed to the difficulties other families will face.

Theme 4: The possibility of discrimination based on genetic information. This theme was evident in stories that dealt with concerns about possible misuse of genetic testing results by insurance companies or employers. For example, Tim Friend of USA Today wrote a front-page brief[67] and a story inside the front section[68] that included description of legislative and policy action related to genetic discrimination. As he summarized in the short front-page piece:

> Eleven states have enacted laws against discrimination on the basis of genetic information; Congress and most states are considering such laws, says Kay Johnson, lobbyist for the March of Dimes.
>
> The Pentagon said Thursday it has instituted a new policy that restricts access and uses of the DNA samples of military personnel. The announcement comes as two Marines face a court-martial hearing for refusing to submit to DNA testing.[69]

In addition to these stories by Friend, 10 other stories mentioned discussion or passage of legislation at the state and federal levels to prevent discrimination based on genetic test results. Two network television pieces dealt with the two Marines' objection to the military's DNA testing based on concerns about possible discrimination.[70] The theme of discrimination -- one with ethical as well as legal overtones -- thus was prominent too in the body of stories analyzed. Although this theme relates to the ethical duty of justice, it also represents a potential consequence of genetic testing. Therefore, it, like the other themes, does not fit neatly into a single ethical box.

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[67] Tim Friend, "Genetic Findings Used to Deny Jobs, Coverage," USA Today, 12 April 1996, sec. A, p. 1 (Final).

[68] Tim Friend, "Researchers Uncover Genetic Discrimination," USA Today, 12 April 1996, sec. A, p. 3 (Final).

[69] Friend, "Genetic Findings," sec. A, p. 1.

[70] Robert Bazell, news report, NBC Nightly News, 15 April 1996; Strait, ABC World News Tonight, 15 April 1996.

Depth of treatment of ethical issues

Consideration of the depth of handling of the ethical dimension cannot be entirely separated from consideration of references to duty and consequence and from ethical questions and themes. As discussion of duties and consequences shows, many stories emphasized consequences, but the important dimension of obligations received less attention overall. Most stories did convey important questions or themes, so they were generally not lacking in depth in that sense.

However, the stories raise a difficult question about their depth in ethics in that even those that dealt with ethical issues significantly often did so without explicit reference to ethics. Of the 31 stories and sidebars analyzed, 14 included no use of the word "ethics" or its cognate terms, except occasionally in citing an "ethicist" as a source. The broadcast pieces in particular (nine out of 12) did not make explicit references to ethics. Even Joe Palca's long, emotionally powerful NPR piece on the plight of the family with a strong breast cancer history[71] did not use the words, even though it included comment from professional sources in addition to the family -- a testing company executive and Francis Collins of the Human Genome Project. Similarly, a 2,700-word cover story in U.S. News & World Report[72] examined the burgeoning availability of genetic tests and concerns that they are reaching the marketplace before the implications of their use have been sorted out -- implications including the uncertainty of their meaning, the lack of ability to prevent or treat some of the diseases, and the possibility of employment or insurance discrimination. But the story never referred to "ethics" or its cognates. In addition, only a smattering of ethicists appear as sources in the stories analyzed. A total of five ethicists or philosophers were interviewed in six stories. The absence of direct references to ethics and ethicists should at least raise a question about these stories' ethical depth because this explicit language and sourcing can so clearly point to the ethical dimension.

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[71] Palca, All Things Considered, 29 June 1995.

[72] Rita Rubin, "Do You Have a Cancer Gene?" U.S. News & World Report, 13 May 1996, 66.

It would be inappropriate, however, to conclude that the absence of ethicists or references to ethics means these stories are automatically deficient in their handling of ethics. Ethics is embedded in the discussions of professional and personal choices posed by genetic testing as those choices are portrayed in the articles. For example, a story by Gina Kolata of the New York Times[73] portrayed the dilemmas confronting doctors because of the discovery that a test which reveals genetic susceptibility to heart disease also points to a higher risk of Alzheimer's disease. Among the difficult choices that physicians face is whether to inform patients who test positive in connection with investigation of heart disease that the test also shows greater susceptibility to Alzheimer's. Kolata's 1,700-word story effectively portrays the difficulty of such moral choices from the standpoint of professionals -- without using the word "ethics."

On the personal level, one of Robert Bazell's stories for NBC provides an example of effective portrayal of human dilemmas. Bazell portrayed the choices facing the family of Gerry Harvell, a woman who tested positive for Huntington's disease, meaning she was virtually certain to develop the degenerative disorder that killed her mother. As Bazell puts it:

> Gerry's brothers and sisters had to make their own decisions. Her brother Jeff decided not to know his genetic future.
>
> JEFF: Why take the test and dwell on what the test results are and waste more time? Because now, I have four children. And my focus right now is the importance of all those children and my wife.[74]

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[73] Gina Kolata, "If Tests Hint Alzheimer's, Should a Patient Be Told?" New York Times, 24 October 1995, sec. A, p. 1 (Late-Final).

[74] Bazell, NBC Nightly News, 6 July 1995.

This man faced choices with a moral component because, as he recognized, his decision would affect his family, for good or ill. By presenting the dilemmas of Gerry Harvell and her family, Bazell thus brought home the ethical dimension on the individual level, again without using the word "ethics" here or elsewhere in the story. Some stories, then, powerfully brought home the ethical import of genetic testing through other choices of words.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study has evaluated news coverage of the ethical implications of genetic testing through a textual analysis of 31 stories that gave significant attention to the ethical dimension of this topic -- though many did so without referring to ethics directly. The analysis has shown that consequentialist concerns, especially avoidance of harm, were prominent in most stories. At the same time, deontological references, while present in most cases, were lacking in a substantial number of stories. However, material that addressed ethics was not limited to references that could be clearly classified as deontological or consequentialist. Ethical themes, sometimes emerging as direct questions to readers, underlined the choices facing individuals and society.

The quality of these stories' coverage of the ethical dimension of genetic testing can be further assessed by setting this coverage in the context of C.E. Harris's discussion of types of moral judgment,[75] in which he distinguishes among actions that are morally obligatory, morally permissible, and morally impermissible. A fourth category for Harris, supererogatory acts, are those that are "above and beyond the call of duty." In the case of acts of commission, they are good to do but morally permissible not to do. Given the limitations on journalists posed by many factors including time and space constraints, full coverage of the ethical dimension in all stories -- or even most stories -- is supererogatory. The sense of moral obligation this study assumes recognizes these constraints and calls for some coverage of the ethical dimension in some stories.

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[75] C.E. Harris, Jr., Applying Moral Theories, 2d ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1992), 58-59. A broader theoretical framework for assessing ethics coverage -- presented in Craig, "Covering the Ethics Angle" and Craig, "A Theoretical Framework" -- incorporates the Harris categories.

Even if one assumes that the news media have a moral obligation to cover important issues in society, it would be, in Harris' terms, supererogatory to expect every story in this case to provide a comprehensive portrayal of duties and consequences or ethical themes. Taken together, the stories reflect both strong and weak points in their portrayal of ethics. As a group, they are skewed in a consequentialist direction, and many do not mention "ethics" or related words specifically at all. At the same time, the stories present important ethical questions and themes. A reader or viewer of even a few of these stories would likely find his or her knowledge of the ethical dimension of genetic testing advanced in significant ways. The stories here, as a group, fall into the "morally obligatory" category from the standpoint of journalistic obligation.

Still, given the importance of genetic testing issues for professionals, public, and policymakers, it is worth asking whether the articles could have done more to build readers' understanding of the relevant ethical concerns -- and more effectively laid the groundwork for public discussion of issues, as journalists practicing forms of civic or public journalism have attempted to do in recent years.[76] Stories that address consequences of genetic testing at least provide the public information that may aid personal decision-making. Those stories that imply duties on the part of individuals may also provide food for personal thought. However, the stories that touch on professional and institutional duties begin to lay the groundwork for people to express their opinions at the level of institutional and public policy or to influence professional practice. To the extent the stories addressed both levels, they became -- at least potentially -- both personally and civically useful. However, given that material implying duties was absent or only minimally present in 11 of the 31 stories analyzed, many of the stories analyzed failed to lay this groundwork. Journalists could improve future coverage -- and its potential to foster understanding and discussion -- by portraying ethical duties at levels beyond the individual.

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[76] Publications that explore the thinking and doing of civic/public journalism include Arthur Charity, Doing Public Journalism (New York: Guilford, 1995); Davis Merritt, Public Journalism and Public Life: Why Telling the News Is Not Enough (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1995); and Jay Rosen and Davis Merritt, Jr., Public Journalism: Theory and Practice (Dayton, Ohio: Kettering Foundation, 1994).

Stories that stated ethical questions and themes, whether clearly deontological or consequentialist or not, also have the potential to foster public understanding. By focusing the ethical discussion on one or a few themes, these stories give lay readers "handles" for grasping the potential impact of genetic testing decisions on themselves, their families, or others like them.[77] By understanding this impact, members of the public again may become better equipped to press for change.

In addition to attempting to portray duties more fully, journalists should consider how they can address ethics more explicitly, in at least some stories. Despite the fact that some stories in this case powerfully portrayed moral choices without referring directly to ethics, it is still reasonable to argue that if the stories are to address ethical implications comprehensively, more of them should refer explicitly to the ethical dimension. The use of the word (or words) might make no difference for some readers, but it at least would confront them directly with the fact that ethical choices are involved. Similarly, use of ethicists as sources is not a panacea for covering ethics, but given the expertise of competent ethics scholars, it also seems reasonable to expect to see more of them quoted in the stories.

This paper contributes to current scholarly understanding of ethics coverage by assessing a body of coverage of a topic with widely recognized ethical implications for professions and society, and by carrying this assessment out using an analytical approach grounded in perspectives widely embraced in ethical theory. Further research on ethics coverage could fruitfully examine coverage of other ethics-laden topics through this theoretical lens. In addition, critical readings of coverage of both genetic testing and other subjects using other perspectives such as Gilligan's ethic of care would further broaden understanding of journalistic portrayal of the ethical dimension of news.

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[77] This discussion of the possible benefits of choosing one or a few themes in an ethics story draws on a telephone interview by the author with Thomas Billitteri, a former editor for Religion News Service, 22 July 1996, in which he referred to the notion of a "first-generation" story that addresses only key issues connected with a complex subject.

Earth First! and the Boundaries of Postmodern Environmental Journalism

Rick Clifton Moore, Ph.D.
Dept. of Communication
Boise State University
1910 University Drive
Boise, ID 83725
(208) 385-3562
rmoore@bsu.idbsu.edu

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Abstract

Modernistic assumptions have long been fundamental to journalistic practice. As those assumptions are increasingly questioned, scholars should consider the implications of alternative foundations, especially as they relate to communicating about important social issues. In this paper the author offers a theoretical discussion and brief qualitative analysis to better understand what postmodern communication (most visibly on the internet) might look like and the difficulties ahead for environmental groups if they adopt anti-foundational and anti-narrative communication patterns.

One of the key elements of modernism is faith in human progress (Lemert, 1993). As part of that faith, even negative consequences of human activity can be reinterpreted or rearranged. When hydroelectric dams bringing power to our homes are suspected of hurting salmon runs, we trust that modernist science and technology can find a solution to a problem posed by modernism itself.

The point of this paper is not to analyze the costs and benefits of this modernist faith. Many authors (e.g, Ellul, 1964 ; Postman, 1993) have done so. Our concern in this analysis is a more recent turn away from faith in modernism to a putative "anti-faith." While proponents of modernism have for years proclaimed that science and technology can help cope with the negative effects of modernism, a diminishing portion of the academic community still holds this view. In fact, Giddens (1989) has suggested that the term "positivism," which represents in some minds the height of modernism has become a stigma. Given this condition, many have abandoned modernist faith. A large number of the infidels (using the term in a strict denotative sense) of whom I speak would call themselves postmodernists. The postmodern community is the focus of this paper. More specifically, I wish to examine the relation between postmodernism, communication, and environmental issues, as exemplified above.

To accomplish this broad analysis, I provide a theoretical discussion of the possibilities of postmodern journalism, especially as it could be achieved on the internet. I then provide a brief qualitative analysis of the communication of a specific postmodern group, the radical environmental group Earth First! In doing this I hope we can begin to understand the motivations, potentials, and drawbacks of postmodernist environmental journalism. Though few concrete answers are provided herein, this exploratory work should suggest important areas for further investigation into what could very possibly be the future of journalism.

The Modernistic Roots of Journalism

To claim that postmodern environmental journalism exists is to beg some historical support for antecedents (and antinomies). Before I suggest that the internet is a postmodern medium and that certain groups are attempting to use the medium in a postmodern way I should first suggest the standard against which these phenomena are placed. I start with the premise that traditional American journalism is thoroughly steeped in modernistic philosophical assumptions (Hallin, 1992).

The source of these assumptions is journalism's rise to cultural prominence contemporaneously with the social sciences. In the 1800s, the social sciences were establishing legitimacy by borrowing many of the characteristics of natural science, and scientific method became the norm for the study of the social world (Mumby, 1997, p. 4). As the academy was embracing Auguste Comte's positive science as the dominant mode of understanding social phenomena, the journalistic community (albeit nascent) was developing a code related to fact gathering and objectivity. Both were specific manifestations of a broader cultural experience described by Schiller (1981) when he stresses the growing power of positivism in the mid-nineteenth century and the way it "nurtured a widespread acceptance of a uniform, objective world" (p. 83). For academics and news reporters alike, this was largely an inviting world. It was a world ripe for exploration and description. As Bybee and Hacker (1990) describe this milieu, "Reality is assumed to exist out there. It is perceived accurately or inaccurately as our senses and instruments of observation allow. Objectivity of knowledge is the ideal of human understanding " (p. 55). Expressed similarly by Krippendorf (1989), the key to positivism "lies in the metaphorical grounding of objectivity in the conception of thinglike objects existing outside and independent of scientific observers" (p. 69). He goes on to state that:

> Our research reports refer to facts as hard, solid, concrete, or tangible. Facts are raw, original, simple, or uncontaminated. Facts are searched for, gotten, found, picked up, collected, gathered from above ground or uncovered, unearthed, dug up from below the surface. Once the observers have obtained such natural and thinglike facts, they may sort them, weigh them, describe them, arrange them, tabulate them, preserve them, look at them, describe them, record them, and process them in the form of data. (Krippendorf, 1989, p. 69)

We should note here that regardless of its venue (the social sciences, or journalism) positivism required a sharp distinction between facts and values (Bloom, 1975). Little wonder, then, that Davis (1995) can say that in American newspapers "News reports are supposed to be 'raw data'" (p. 339). For journalism, then, one manifestation of a positivistic foundation was in the distinction between the news page and the editorial page. Newsgathering was simply the process of gathering facts. Others were left with the task of evaluating them.

The Challenge of Postmodernism

For a number of reasons, both social scientists and journalists have become uneasy with the constraints of a positivistic view of the world. Members of academia appear to have questioned the dominant view of their work first, with reporters now beginning to follow their lead. As Bybee and Hacker (1990) describe it, "while previously, the concept of objectivity [for journalists] found validity in other areas of research and thought such as academia, those bases of support are no longer as available" (65). The social sciences have been reeling with the challenges of postmodern thought, and even physical science "is no longer trusted as an objective source of definitive knowledge" (Davis, 1995, p. 341).

The basis for these challenges largely relates to postmodernism's interest in the role of language in knowledge production. Though the term postmodernism is variously defined (Morely, 1996), herein it will be associated with the work of recent French philosophy and the work of American Richard Rorty. Bybee and Hacker (1990) suggest that it is the Francophones whose study of the sociology of knowledge has begun to make many question positivism. Specifically, it has been Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, and Baudrillard who have called into question certain fundamental assumptions of modernism.

On the North American continent, similar ideas have been propagated by Richard Rorty, whose work on the contingency of language is the foundation for much postmodern thought. Rorty's (1989) central assumption is that we can know little of the world around us because of our use of language. As opposed to the positivists who see the world as an objective entity to be translated into facts, Rorty sees the world as a subjective entity where facts no longer exist. Put succinctly:

> Truth cannot be out there—cannot exist independently of the human mind—because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false, the world on its own—unaided by the describing activities of human beings—cannot. (Rorty, 1989, p. 5)

What such a situation forces upon us is a resignation to simply choose certain "languages" for the purpose of describing the world as best we can. None of these descriptions is any better than any other, because all are contingent. Frodeman (1992, p. 310-311) accurately reflects a Rortyan perspective when he states that in a postmodern world "Truth is individualized: there is no longer 'the truth,' but only a potentially infinite number of truths corresponding to the equally infinite number of different places that people inhabit in the world." Obviously there is a down side to this. Even those such as Mumby (1997) who are sympathetic to some elements of postmodernism, recognize that it has tendencies toward "relativism, nihilism, and self-indulgence" (p. 3).

On Postmodern Journalism

On the other hand, many see postmodern philosophy as liberating. Such a perception of liberation spreads beyond the realm of the social sciences and into journalism. The underlying principle here is that positivism stifled those who observed the world. In contrast, the vision of postmodernism is a vision in which observers are actively engaged in constructing what they observe. In the broader world of communication studies (which might be seen as the link between social sciences and journalism) Krippendorf (1989) proposes that a valid alternative to positivism must make observers "aware of their own creativity in constructing the realities we will all have to live with" (p. 79). Rortyan postmodernism aptly fits this criterion in its suggestion that by virtue of the language we use, a particular world arises. This is simply an extension of pragmatism. That is, Rorty is not concerned with what actions the natural world forces upon us, but instead how our choices might lead us to certain actions (Rorty, 1991). Or, in different words, Rorty is suggesting, "we give up the notion of science traveling toward an end called 'correspondence with reality' and instead say merely that a given vocabulary works better than another for a given purpose" (Rorty, 1982, p. 183). Rorty labels people who can adapt in this way "ironists." They recognize their own perspective and are not so attached to it that they think it better than any other is. In some ways this is also an extension of the Kuhnian idea of science.

But even though the journalistic tradition indirectly borrows from science (by way of social science), most journalists see themselves as detached from such philosophical debates.

One might thus wonder if such speculative palaver would affect the day to day work of news gatherers. Prominent communication scholars, among them Theodore Glasser and James Ettema seem to think it could. Their claim is that Rorty's approach "coincides with the position taken by sophisticated (emphasis added) students of that peculiar language game known as journalism" (Ettema and Glasser1994, p. 6). The suggestion is that Rorty's postmodern approach to knowledge might be more satisfying and more productive than the positivistic orientation. Some see the latter as the reason the media haven't solved (and perhaps have contributed to) many of the problems of the modern world (Davis, 1995, p. 326).

Glasser (1992) has even suggested that postmodern creativity is an appropriate alternative to objectivity. Creativity, in his view, allows journalistic individuality and imagination. Conversely, objectivity turns journalists into victims of routine and technique. Far from a world of such mechanization he suggests that journalism in the post-objective world would be more like "story-telling" than reporting. He and James Ettema (1994, p. 7) ground the idea of storytelling most firmly in Rorty, who leads them to believe that the ironist's fundamental role in a postmodern world is to tell stories that make us reluctant to impose suffering on one another. The creativity of this approach is highlighted when the authors suggest that the process eventually allows the journalist to "bring a new world into existence" (p. 7).

Of course, the reaction many traditional journalists have to the notion of creativity is that it is anathema to a group whose traditional professional goals are simply to relate facts about the world. Glasser (1992) himself quotes Walter Cronkite as saying "let's go with the job of reporting and let the chips fall where they may" (p. 183). Artists are creative; journalists are objective. Granted, for many positivist reporters (perhaps even Cronkite holds this view) the point is not objectivity for objectivity's sake. It is assumed that once an objective picture of the world is presented, adjustments to that world can be made. This perspective posits that the truer the depiction of the world, the more likely good things will result. In other words, any tinkering based on factual information might be ameliorative. The journalistic "realists" who feel this way probably would argue that Glasser's creative renditions of the world leave the citizen with nothing real on which to operate.

Others are not loath to accept premises other than realism, but still are not willing to continue too far on Rorty's (potentially nihilistic) path. Ettema (1994, p. 1) sees Habermas as an example of such a maneuver. But Ettema and Glasser recognize the importance of staying on path. Even when pressed to a difficult point of having to defend a truly democratic value we hold dear, the two authors point out the difficulties of veering off course. Following Rorty, Ettema and Glasser (1994, p. 6) are forced to concede that adherents of Rortyan thought must recognize that there is no ultimate criterion on which challenges can be dismissed, only contingent language. One reason for such persistence might simply be philosophical rigor. Rorty's position compels one toward such a difficult position. There is also a teleological rationale here, however. Any attempt to create a shared vision to justify social and political activity is an attempt at metanarrativity. As Mumby (1997) states it, "Postmodern thought argues that 'consensus' is an intrinsically modernist notion that leads to totalitarian and totalizing ways of thinking" (p. 15). Ettema uses Lyotard as a justification against such a tendency, seeing it as violence against heterogeneity.

The only avenue left for the postmodern journalist, then, is small stories. From such a standpoint, the journalist's role is simply to tell as many stories as possible, "listening to lots of different people" (Ettema and Glasser, 1994, p. 6) so that we can build a life together. Two things should be noted here. One is that there is no basis to judge these stories. As

Harms and Dickens (1996) point out, the postmodern perspective on media demands that "all media discourses, formats, codes, and practices are to be accepted, and none is any better than the others" (p. 21). One implication of this is that "journalism" becomes a loose term for just about any form of mass communication. There is little to distinguish postmodern journalism from any other form of postmodern storytelling (since no stories are presumed to be true). Given this foundation, the second point is obvious. Only minor insight can be gained from such communication. Any grand story begins to develop a metanarrative, and metanarratives are always suspect since they recommend a common vision. The only vision Rorty is willing to share (and he admits it is simply a personal choice) is that suffering is bad. As proposed in postmodernism, there will not be any greater truth developed in our dialogue, but in sharing our stories we will be "more reluctant to inflict suffering on one another" (Ettema and Glasser, 1994, p. 7).

The Limitations of Postmodern Journalism

Though there are many who will have already abandoned hope of finding common ground with postmodernism and will see little value in postmodern journalism, others might find the call for an attenuation of suffering a worthy goal. Even so, two clear questions come to mind if we take Ettema and Glasser's notion of diminished suffering to be a central tenet of postmodern journalism. One of those deals with the breadth of the activity, the other with the success of the activity.

On the first count, we should note that reluctance to inflict suffering on one another is a seemingly inviting but quite limited goal within the scope of journalism. Though much of news gathering and news writing in the late 20th century relates to purely social phenomena (e.g., coverage of government activity in such areas as welfare, foreign policy, and education of our children), some relates to phenomena that entail dimensions that are at least partially extra-human (e.g., natural disasters, natural resource management issues). Caroline New (1995) aptly suggests that the former category deals mostly with discursive reality, while the second category includes many aspects of extra-discursive reality. The question to be considered here is whether a philosophy whose cornerstone is attenuation of suffering can serve the needs of the second category. To embark on a form of journalism that is incapable of addressing those problems adequately might be fateful.

The second key question is whether the means by which postmodern journalism appears to operate are adequate to the tasks ahead. While postmodernists suggest that the traditional tools of modernistic discourse have failed us, others question whether the abandonment of those tools leaves any means by which those who want to change the world (in any positive way) can do so. Nancy Harstock (1990) stated it precisely when she wrote:

> Somehow it seems highly suspicious that it is at the precise moment when so many groups have been engaged in "nationalisms" which involve redefinitions of the marginalized Others that suspicions emerge about the nature of the "subject," about the possibilities for a general theory which can describe the world, about historical "progress." Why is it that just as the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic? (p. 165)

More broadly stated, one can make a cogent argument that postmodernism abolishes the tools not only of oppression but also of liberation. While postmodernists cheer the fact that the abandonment of modernism gives oppressors no new tools of oppression, it also completely strips tools from the oppressed. The resulting system merely maintains the status quo.

When both this and the earlier issues are taken into account, the key question is whether postmodern thought is applicable to and adequate for communication about environmental issues. In slightly different words, "Can environmental advocacy journalism be postmodern?" To address that question, I would like to summarize the above material by suggesting four clearly identifiable characteristics of postmodern journalism. Given the philosophical assumptions of Rorty, postmodern journalism should: 1) focus on small, localized stories 2) focus on suffering in an effort to diminish such 3) view other epistemologies as equally valid with rationalism 4) reject metanarratives for teleological purposes.

In the next section, I intend to use these four criteria to address the question raised above. To do so, I will argue that an adequate concrete example of an attempt to engage in postmodern environmental advocacy is already available for analysis. The justification for the claim is that many see the radical environmental group Earth First! as the epitome of postmodernism. In addition, the group's most recent attempts at communicating are carried out on the internet, an arguably postmodern medium. If postmodern environmental advocacy is possible, there should be clear evidence of its presence in this site.

Postmodern Environmentalism

Earth First! is a loosely knit band of environmentalists whose motto is "no compromise in the defense of mother earth" (Lange, 1990, p. 487). There seems to be some disagreement on exactly how and when the group was formed, but two key features are clear.[1] The two fundamental elements of Earth First's identity are monkey wrenching as a means of political action and deep ecology as a philosophical base (Short, 1991, p. 177).

Monkey wrenching is of less importance for our purposes. It is the physical means by which the group occasionally tries to achieve its goals. Envisioning themselves as standing in the pathway of an increasingly mechanized society, Earth Firsters sometimes feel the need to use physical tools to stop the machine. Examples of monkey wrenching include decommissioning heavy equipment (such as logging trucks), and putting metal spikes in trees to prevent logging.

More crucial for current discussion is Earth First's adherence to deep ecology as a philosophical position. Deep ecology is the environmental philosophy developed by Norwegian social activist Arne Naess (Devall, 1992, p. 52). Fundamental in this view is the principle that human beings are part of nature and nature is a part of humans. As Devall (1992) states it, "Out of identification with forests, rivers, deserts, or mountains comes a kind of solidarity: 'I am the rainforest' or 'I am speaking for this mountain because it is part of me'" (p. 52).

From such a perspective, the detached rationality of positivism is of little value. Hence numerous authors have noticed the connection between this element of radical environmentalism and postmodernism. Frodeman (1992) states plainly that "radical environmentalism could be viewed as the first fully "postmodern" weltanschauung, thoroughly surpassing the modernist paradigm of the last three centuries. (318).

Going further, he states:

> Postmodernism and radical environmentalism have thus seemed in the eyes of some as natural complements to one another. Postmodernism deepens radical environmentalism's criticism of the modernist project, especially in its focus upon the limits of quantitative rationality, as well as its criticism of hierarchical relations. (Frodeman, 1992, p. 309)

These characteristics can be applied specifically to Earth First! Ingalsbee (1996) suggests that the group demonstrates the "oneness" ontology mentioned above, and that such an ontology necessarily leads to an epistemology that "incorporates emotional, intuitional (sic), mystical ways of knowing, along with scientific knowledge and rationalistic thinking" (p. 268-269).

Unlike positivists, who feel the need to detach themselves from the world to understand it, deep ecologists need to be a part of it. Ingalsbee (1996) gives a number of examples of Earth First! activities that represent emotional and playful discourse as opposed to rational discourse on environmental issues. And Lange states:

> Finding their raison d'etre in conflict, Earth First! Favors action over debate, passion over consistency, fun over seriousness. They claim to reject the "legitimizing" trappings of rationality, consistency, and credibility, preferring irony, paradox, satire, contradiction, and parody. Yet they are engaged in a sophisticated, highly visible, and formidable advocacy campaign for wilderness preservation and restoration. (Lange, 1990, p. 474)

In the postmodern vision of deep ecology, then, radical environmentalism does not give up hope of defending the earth. It is apparent from the material above that Earth Firsters feel communication is an (but not the only) appropriate tool for this task. One of the most recent communication tools at their disposal is the internet.

The Postmodern Medium

Ettema and Glasser's brief proposal for postmodern journalism deals with philosophical issues, not practical ones. One practical matter they do not investigate is the channel through which postmodern stories might be disseminated. In the very era in which they write, the traditional channels for journalism (print and broadcast news) are experiencing a full frontal assault from a new competitor, the internet.

Other writers have paid more attention to these technological changes and their potential repercussions. John Pavlik (1996, p. 214-216) suggests that news writers might be an endangered species, with many of their traditional journalistic functions being eliminated by technology. More specifically related to the philosophical issues of the role of journalists, Davis (1995) suggests that the decline of modernism will combine with such technological transformations to bring about a new form of journalism:

> The media workers of the future may not refer to themselves as journalists and they may not conceptualize what they create as news…The news industry could give way to people working inside communities who utilize new communication technologies to serve those communities. (p. 351).

And this goes beyond traditional reporting. Davis and Jasinski (1993) even suggest that new social movements might be able to cultivate new forms of public culture using the medium.

The crucial point here is that the internet is thought by many to offer the thoroughly postmodern form of communication. Nunes (1995) for example, feels that the multiple worlds created by the world wide web "ultimately offer both the seductions and subductions of a postmodern 'world'" (p. 315). Just as Rorty suggests that we create multiple worlds by our language games, internet communicators can create new realities on the web. Nunes sees this as a simple extension of the ideas of the original continental framers of postmodernism. From a Rortyan perspective, advances in scientific language created new worlds (e.g., the language of Newton allowed us to see things we could not see before), and the power of the internet will equally speak new worlds into existence. Perhaps we are on the very edge of this experience:

> For Baudrillard, the shift from the real to the hyperreal occurs when representation gives way to simulation. One could argue that we are standing at the brink of such a moment, marked primarily by the emerging presence of a virtual world. Just as the highways once transformed our country, the "information superhighway" offers an image of dramatic change in American lives through a change in virtual landscape. (Nunes, 1995, p. 315)

The image of the highway is appropriate. The highway system in American culture holds a vision of personal freedom. Every American is perceived to have the freedom to pull up stakes and move. The information superhighway carries a similar image, but not of physical movement. The image is of the movement of ideas, meanings, and feelings. Each and every person in the country is perceived to be able to share his or her ideas with every other American by way of this route. One group that is choosing to travel on this highway is Earth First!

Earth First! on the Net

The wonder of the information highway is that it is thoroughly mapped and travelers can quickly move from one location to another with a click of a mouse. The mapping process is provided by search engines such as Yahoo and Infoseek. By typing in a term (e.g., "environmental groups") one can find out home page locations for a myriad of entities around the country.[2] Once such home pages are located, the internet traveler can simply point a cursor at a highlighted set of text and quickly be taken to that location. Individuals and organizations have created these sites because they wish to share important information (at least information perceived to be so).

Earth First! has a number of these sites. Given the group's anti-hierarchical and anti-bureaucratic structure, none can claim status as the "official" home page as commercial organizations' home pages often do. Perhaps this is a proper manifestation of the nature of postmodernism. Both Earth First! and the internet lack clear identity. In the case of the environmental group, there has been a consistent plea to maintain openness. This means that there are no officers, no membership lists, and no official bylaws (Foreman, 1991, p. 21). Obviously this makes it difficult to tell what is an official Earth First! homepage and what is not, but this is the case in cyberspace generally. One of the persistent complaints about the medium is that there are no gatekeepers. Anybody can set up a homepage under any auspices he or she wishes. The reader of a page can only assume that any names on the page accurately reflect the true creators of the page. Though legal action might be taken on the basis of trademark or copyright, there is no other basis for confronting a person or group who misidentifies him or herself.

In the case of Earth First!, this does not appear to be a serious problem. Only a small number of Earth First! homepages are on the web. Many of those are created by international branches of the organization (especially in the U.K.).[3] In the United States, there appear to only be three generic (national in scope) sites, and a number of regional or local sites.[4] Due to limited space, only the generic sites are discussed here, and the focus of our analysis will be on one.

One national site is under construction and at this point mainly includes links to other environmental pages.[5] The two other sites are fully developed and have a number of similarities. One of these sites carries the banner "Earth First! The Radical Environmental Journal."[6] The other simply has the headline "Earth First!"[7] Each of these pages offers a jump to another page which gives a brief description of Earth First! and its goals. In addition, each home page has jumps to text pages of articles taken from the paper editions of Earth First! Journal.

Worth noting here is that both of these home pages are exhibiting what one might expect in a fledgling medium. Much of what the reader finds is material borrowed from another more established medium to fill space. As newspapers have become much more computerized, there is little difficulty in taking text which was originally intended for the print version of Earth First! Journal and loading it on to a homepage. Pavlik (1996, p. 200) refers to this as "shovel-ware." The content is the same as that carried on the paper product. It is simply converted to electronic form without altering it in ways to be better suited for the new medium. There is a slightly derogatory connotation to the term because the content fails to make use of the power of the new medium.

Making better use of the medium of the Earth First! home page is a "photo gallery" provided by another jump.[8] The photo gallery makes better use of the medium because it invites visitors to move through a series of pages (each with image and text) at their own pace and learn about the effects of deforestation. Unlike the articles at this site, the photo gallery appears to have been created directly for the web. Hence it is as close to postmodern environmental advocacy on a postmodern medium as will probably be found.[9]

Criteria of Postmodern Environmental Journalism

Small, Localized Stories

In his analysis of the potential for postmodern political reporting, Ettema (1994) suggests that "there are no big stories to tell, but the little ones do matter" (p. 17). He examines Bryna Brennan's reporting from Central America in the late 1980s. Brennan serves as a great example because she focused on individual citizens who were victims of conflict beyond their control. The contrast here is stark. Brennan worked for the Associated Press, and her stories were run in American newspapers. That is, she worked for a modern organization and communicated via a modern medium. Yet much of her work (in spite of her continued attachment to some modernist epistemological elements) meets a key criterion of postmodern journalism, small, localized stories. In the photo gallery analyzed here, we have a postmodern organization presenting material through a postmodern medium. We should expect to see small, localized stories here.

However, Earth First's opening salvo in this photo essay is a regional, not local story. The subject is not a small parcel of land in a clearly defined location, perhaps a specific old growth forest in Oregon. Instead, the site is the "Northwestern United States" (Earth First!, 1997,

p. 1) a region that has millions of acres of forests. Even less local are occasional references to "rainforests" (Earth First!, 1997, p. 5; p. 6) in the essay. Though many environmentalists have tended recently to focus attention to regions of the Amazon in regards to this issue, Earth First! makes no attempt to do so here, choosing instead a global ecological environment. For all we know, the rainforests of which they speak are in Indonesia.

As a clear alternative, Earth First! comes much closer to a postmodern approach when presenting a vignette about two young musicians who enter a local Burger King to sing songs about problems facing the rainforests (Earth First!, 1997, p. 6). Though nameless, these characters give us a much clearer sense of local struggle as they present their message to the people in the restaurant and also to the manager. This is also the case with images presented of a California state government meeting room where Earth Firsters dressed as animals to protest certain state policies (Earth First!, 1997, p. 15). In both of these instances we get a greater sense of "locality."

Obvious questions need to be addressed in this regard, however. Traditional news organizations (working with modernists assumptions) have long used localization and personification as a ways of representing bigger issues. The exact way in which localness defines a postmodernist approach needs to be worked out. For our present purposes, we can suggest that one aspect of postmodern locality relates to the local portrayal of suffering.

Focus on Suffering

In the Earth First! homepage, however, what suffering is revealed is painted in broad strokes, and definitely not at the local level. Four sets of victims can be discerned from the depiction here, and the focus on their suffering is very impersonal.

The most consistently portrayed victim is wildlife. Habitat destruction is a recurrent theme in this collection of prose and photography. Salmon are mentioned as having their streams silted because of deforestation(Earth First!, 1997, p. 2). More directly, the animals that need the forests themselves are portrayed as homeless (Earth First!, 1997, p. 1). In all of this, though, there are few local accounts. Rather than taking us to a specific location where these events have occurred and demonstrating the suffering of a specific animal or animals, the choice is clearly to stand at a distance.

Human victims are portrayed similarly when it comes to suffering. Though we are led to believe there is much suffering occurring (in three different ways), we see none of it up close. One example of suffering is the loss of jobs if unsustainable practices continue (Earth First!, 1997, p. 11). A second example is respiratory difficulty caused by woodburning (Earth First!, 1997, p. 12). A third area of human suffering (Earth First!, 1997, p. 13) is use of taxes to fund savings and loan bailouts (roughly connected to the subject at hand since Charles Hurwitz, a lumber baron, was also involved in a national savings and loan scandal). In each of these accounts we are asked to experience this suffering by way of a brief summary of the issues on a grand scale. We never meet a real person who is experiencing the suffering the essay describes. We never see images of such suffering.

Instead, the one image we see repeatedly is the image of trees, both standing and fallen. Given philosophical predispositions described earlier, one would expect that there might be more specific attention given to the meaning of these images. As Ingalsbee (1996) points out, Earth First! takes a "biocentric" perspective. This means that they should argue that all living things are of equal value. That trees are in of themselves suffering is a worthy consideration from this standpoint. In the essay, however, trees seem to be presented as a means to an end.

Epistemological Grounding

The bigger issue, perhaps, is the means by which the reader is convinced of suffering. The key here is that our discussion of postmodernism suggested that a postmodern journalism would place less emphasis on objective data gathering and rational analysis than do modern forms of practice. From a Rortyan perspective objectivity and rationality are suspect. From a biocentric perspective, they are overrated. Frodeman (1992) suggests that the key feature of the biocentric orientation is a recognition of the "limits of quantitative rationality" (p. 309). As such rationality is debunked, a mystical approach is to replace it. Though clearly negative in his reaction to this change, Stark (1995) aptly describes it, saying "in place of ethical reasoning, deep ecology offers quaint spiritualistic assertions about nature" (p. 270).

In this instance, spiritualistic assertions are few. One assertion that could be considered quaint and spiritualistic is the claim on page 15 that the animal kingdom is speaking out if we will only listen to them. This also relates vaguely to Earth Firsters donning animal costumes to give forest animals voice. But such references are few and poorly fleshed out. On the other hand, references to objective science and logical inference are much more plentiful.

For example, much of this essay would be severely weakened without evidence provided by the physical sciences (historical and present). References to "thousands of species of plants and animals" (Earth First!, 1997, p. 11) are weakened without the benefit of western science and its rational taxonomies. In the same way, references to salmon spawning (Earth First!, 1997, p. 1) are indebted to modern research on silting of streams and its effects on eggs and fry. Without detached, rational scientific observation, concrete claims on these matters are difficult to make.

And some claims made by Earth First! in the photo gallery depend not only on rationality, but on quantitative rationality (to use Frodeman's term). One of the most blatant of these is the statement that since "the mid-1800s, only 150 years ago, 96 percent of the California Redwoods have been destroyed" (Earth First!, 1997, p. 10). Clearly Earth First! is either making guesses here or relying on data collected by modernist scientists. Perhaps even more stunning is the claim that "particulates from woodsmoke are less than 10 microns in size and once lodged in human lung, remain there permanently, potentially causing cancer, and certainly causing various other respiratory problems" (Earth First!, 1997, p. 12). In this instance Earth First! not only uses detached quantitative rationality (measuring the effect of woodsmoke), but does so in a way that is requisite on technology. Without powerful microscopes, one cannot measure the size of particulates.

Rejection of Metanarrative

Such quibbles (about epistemology) might seem silly to some who have one ultimate goal in mind, saving the planet. But is this lofty objective that brings the biggest difficulty for any postmodern thought. After all, from a Rortyan perspective, communication must eschew metanarrativity. Earlier studies by Ettema (1994) and Ettema and Glasser (1994) both show the difficulty of this. Often the rejection of one narrative leads to the de facto development of another.

In the case of Earth First!, there is little evidence a conscious effort is being made to avoid narrativity. In fact, the opposite is true. If a narrative is a story that gives a sense of history and purpose, the photo gallery discussed here is exemplary. What is clearly evident is a sense of past, present, and potential future based on a shared vision.

The past is briefly stated, but stated clearly enough. The author obviously believes that there was a period where nature was in proper balance. The long duration of that period is stated at least four different times in the essay. On page 3, the "ancient" forests are said to have taken "many thousands of years" to develop. On page 4, soil development is mentioned in similar terms. Page 9 speaks of the thousands of years it took for forests to reach a state of diversity. And page 13 talks about the redwoods being 2,000 years old.

Yet this is the distant past. A more immediate past is represented by the 1800s, when these trees were first cut (Earth First!, 1997, p. 3). This beginning of a modern period brings a negative change in tone to our narrative. Lifestyle choices seem to be the main problem. In areas such as wood stove use, they are seen as causing air pollution (Earth First!, 1997, p. 12). In other areas they contribute to consumerism and the development of suburbia (Earth First!, 1997, p. 5). The implication is that a large number of wrong choices have changed the once pristine environment of the early 1800s. One example is the diminishing number of redwoods (cited earlier). Beyond personal choices, businesses make things worse with their shortsightedness (Earth First!, 1997, p. 9) and greed (Earth First!, 1997, p. 13). In addition, we have a civic environment that is almost as deplorable as the natural one. Government officials at the state (Earth First!, 1997, page 14) and national (Earth First!, 1997, p. 13) level are equally greedy and thus corruptible. As a result, those entrusted with protecting the environment look the other way when violence is done to nature (Earth First!, 1997, p. 11; p. 17).

The only hope for change, then, is the action of the common citizen. By enlightening the general public (Earth First!, 1997, p. 6), and perhaps even enlightening local minions of corporations, consciousness could be changed. Barring that, concrete actions of civil disobedience (Earth First!, 1997, p. 8; p. 9; p. 10; p. 19), and public demonstration (Earth First!, 1997 , p.14; p. 15; p. 16; p. 17), by "earth police" (Earth First!, 1997, p. 18) might make a difference. If such as these do not grow weary, the future might be brighter than the present.

And what might sustain these weary earth police? A cohesive narrative, would suffice. And that is certainly what appears to be presented here. Just as the narrative of the Cold War once motivated America to invest great financial and emotional capital into a battle against communism (Ettema, 1994), this narrative could motivate citizens to fight (in a "no compromise" engagement) to save the earth. In short, it might "authorize beliefs" (Ettema, 1994, p. 2), and "identify what is reasonable and right" (Ettema, 1994, p. 7). But it cannot do so without creating a certain degree of homogeneity, a very un-postmodern idea.

Where is Postmodern Journalism?

If there are internet communicators incarnating Rorty's vision of the ironic postmodern journalist out there, they do not appear to be creating web material for Earth First! Granted, this was a brief analysis. Yet a cursory examination of the other materials (mostly short articles) revealed that they are even less attuned to the ideals of postmodern communication.

Certainly this raises a number of important questions. Chief among them is the applicability of postmodern thought to advocacy of any form. The accusation that postmodernism is highly suited for cynics and nihilists might be born out by further analysis of the sort done here. In any case, Earth First's no-compromise dedication to a wild earth and its maintenance of a positive future vision appear to be the main constraints preventing it from adapting such a form of postmodernism. New (1995) might have predicted findings of this sort when she proclaimed that many progressives bristle at postmodernism's conservatism. Her critique could be extended to political activists of any stripe (even "conservatives") if their stated goals are to change the world. Frodeman (1992) reiterates this specifically in regards to environmental issues:

> No critique is complete until it offers at least a sketch of what should replace the status quo. It is at this point that postmodernism too often has failed. Postmodernists have seldom offered a program for the bettering of society. The insistence upon the respect for difference embodies only the negative goal of freedom from coercion. (p. 318)

Restated, if the goal is to allow tremendous liberty, postmodernism is an adequate language. If the goal is to change the world, postmodernism is not the worldview of choice.

On the other hand, the difficulty here might be a matter of semantics. Worth further thinking is Hennessy's (1993) notion of "resistance" versus "ludic" postmodernism. In the former, there is thought to be a viable political agenda. In the latter, "resistance to dominant relations of power is at best engaged at the level of guerrilla tactics, and collective action is perceived as naïve and subject to co-optation by the status quo."(Mumby, 1997, p. 15) We will have to wait for further research to determine the utility of those terms. In this study, the reader should recognize that there were numerous occasions where the Rortyan ideal of postmodernism didn't quite fit the picture painted by Earth Firsters, making us wonder whether they can justifiably be labeled postmodern. Quigley (1992), dissenting from the large number of scholars who label radical environmentalists as postmodernist, even intimates that much of the movement is actually "anti-postmodernist."

This is a bit of an overcorrection, perhaps, but there is an inconsistency in groups such as Earth First! that would make many philosophers cringe. Dave Foreman (1991, p. vii), the group's founder admits there are inconsistencies in his own thought. Many elements in his writing suggest a very modernist view of the world (at least, nothing close to Rortyan postmodernism). For example, he clearly states that the world exists independent of our thinking. Addressing the age old philosophical question of epistemology, he states:

> The world exists independently of us. When a tree falls in the forest and no human is there to hear it, it still falls, the shock waves still echo from bluff to cliff, the bears and the birds yet hear, and life goes on. Only an arrogant fool could think otherwise." (Foreman, 1991, p. 53).

Even more precisely, he states:

> Where is the real world? What is reality? Is it within ourselves—in our minds, our consciousness? Is reality only what we perceive? Are our minds paramount, with no reality apart from our heads? No! The real world is out there—independent, autonomous, sovereign, not ruled by human awareness. The real Grizzly is not in our heads; she is in the Big Outside—rooting, snuffing, roaming, living, perceiving on her own. Wilderness is not merely an attitude of mind; it is greater, than ourselves and our perceptions of it. We do not create reality; reality creates us. It is not "I think, therefore I am"; it is "I am, therefore I think" (Foreman, 1991, p. 51-52).

But issues of knowledge are not the only features that might distinguish forms of postmodernism. Foreman's epistemology leads to a concrete axiology, an axiology that is far from anything Rorty proposes. As New (1995, p. 817) states, Rortyan postmodern epistemology and Rortyan postmodern axiology go hand in hand. Both lead to agnosticism (using the term beyond its typical metaphysical sense). As Rorty cannot with certainty state that he holds some knowledge to be true, neither can he with certainty hold some values to be worth holding. Foreman is under no such compunction.

> If there is a theme that consistently runs through this book, other than the intrinsic value of all natural things and the need for personal action by every one of us, it is an

> embracing of diversity. I am no moral relativist. I believe that some things are good and some are bad. I have a value system. (Foreman, 1991, p. ix)

Perhaps this simply reflects the difference between a philosopher and an activist. The former feels compelled to work within the rules of his field, the latter is concerned only with praxis.

And the issue of praxis is crucial when we think of the internet. Though much has been written about the communicative dimensions of the new medium, relatively little research has been done in specific areas such as its potential for social movements. In theoretical understanding, for example, there is widely held belief that the internet will break down spatial boundaries and newer "cybercommunities" will be created. Research on the social consequences of these cybercommunities is sparse, however, and crucial questions remain. How much positive change can the internet bring among cybercommunities? Students of postmodernism seem uncertain here. Davis (1995), for example, appears optimistic in the following account of the future.

> Many postmodern theorists argue that as time passes we will depend less on bureaucracy as a means of organizing social life and depend more on culture created by diverse communities. If this view proves valid, the news industry as we know it should fade away and be replaced by alternative, community based media. The business of packaging quantities of information and selling it to audiences will become less and less profitable as people come to rely on community media. Community media will have at their disposal the resources of the much touted information superhighway. They will be able to use these resources to create innovative "packages" of information that are tailored to specific communities." (p. 350)

Yet if postmodernism's pleasures (using the term to describe a diminishing of suffering) depend on telling local stories, how will such a medium assist us? And equally important, how does a world-wide medium of such power redefine locality?

Frodeman (1992), though writing of postmodernism's relation to environmentalism in general, and not the internet, provides keen insights into the importance of these questions of space. He does so by reminding us of historical perspectives. His argument is that much of our difficulty in western democracy comes from a Lockean political philosophy that was the product of an "endless supply of space" (resulting after the discovery of the Americas). Though that philosophy might have served well in early America, it fails us now. There are no spaces left for us to get away. More precisely:

> This possibility of escape made it possible for the question of the good to be privatized within the community, thus making possible the political theory of John Locke. Today, however, these conditions no longer prevail. Because there are no more elsewheres—all the spaces are filled; all countries are settled—the question of the common good is reasserting itself with renewed force. (Frodeman, 1992, p. 317).

His analysis is keen, but fails to recognize the affinity many postmodernists are developing for the internet. After all, postmodernists who have faith in the new medium might propose that all spaces are not filled. The internet allows us to create whole new worlds of existence.

While many postmodernists might find this appealing, many will feel it suggests an abandonment of the natural world. The key reason that Earth Firsters probably do not fit the descriptions of postmodernism provided here is that they are unwilling to live their lives in the cyberworld, choosing instead to mold the original world to meet their standards of livability. If the internet is a useful tool to do this, so be it, but the ersatz world of the net is no substitute for the real thing. The key dispute here (and the key area of study for the future) seems to be between two disparate groups, those proposing new worlds, and those preserving old ones. As Nunes (1995, p. 314) fittingly puts it, “And the more ecstatic the promises of new possible worlds, the more problematic the concept of “the world” becomes.”

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Notes

[1] Though not crucial to our discussion, future researchers may want to clarify the story of the group's founding. Current writings are either contradictory or lack preciseness (or both). For example, Lange (1990) suggests that the idea for the group developed on a camping trip to Mexico. Foreman (1991) suggests that the idea for the group emerged during a camping trip in Wyoming. There is also some disagreement about who the originating members were.

[2] Clearly this is getting to be a more cumbersome task as the number of sites on the world wide web is growing. The easiest way to find an Earth First! web site is to type in their proper name. If one simply browses under the key words "environmental groups," patience would be a necessity. Another worthy area of study in the future might be the categorization created by services such as Yahoo. To find environmental organizations in that service, one must first move to the category "Society and Culture." "Society and Culture," however, is not listed on the opening menu of the service.

[3] One useful hompage has a list of links from the UK. The reader can find this homepage at http://www.hrc.wmin.ac.uk/campaigns/ef/efhtmls/localgroups.html.

[4] For examples of regional and local homepages, see the Headwaters Forest Earth First! homepage (http://www.envirolink.org/orgs/headwaters-ef) or the Boulder Earth First! homepage (http:bcn.boulder.co.us/environment/earthfirst/).

[5] This site is located at http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/Vines/9901/.

[6] This site is located at http://www.envirolink.org/orgs/ef/

[7] This site is located at http://www.imaja.com/change/environment/ef/earthfirst.html.

[8] The photo gallery starts with http://www.imaja.com/change/environment/ef/photo01.html

[9] Perhaps an even more postmodern form would include video and hypertext. The latter is especially important because it allows the individual reader to create his/her reality all the more.

Social Movement Organization Collective Action Frames and Press Receptivity: A Case Study of Land Use Activism in a Maryland County

Brian B. Feeney
Temple University
Student Paper
March 23, 1998

550 Old Bay Lane
Havre de Grace, MD 21078

(410) 939-4100

abstract

In this study focus groups were used to interview members of a social movement organization (SMO), real estate developers and the local newspaper editor in a case study of land use politics in a suburbanizing Maryland county. The study found that SMOs have a greater barrier to entry to the newsnet to overcome, requiring them to act as surrogate reporters. Also, both groups complained of poor reporting due to the newspaper's use of inexperienced reporters.

Introduction

The way in which social movement organizations (SMOs) engage in collective action framing has been widely studied by sociologists and political scientists (Gamson, 1992; Gamson & Wolfseld, 1993; Morris, 1992; Snow & Benford, 1992; Tarrow, 1992; Zald, 1996). The way in which news routines and the professional socialization of journalists affects what is defined as news has been widely studied by sociologists and communication scholars (Breed, 1955, Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Roscho, 1975; Schudson, 1991; Tuchman, 1978). At the same time, critical approaches have been used to analyze the underlying power relationships associated with news gathering and production. Fiske (1990), Gitlin (1980) the Glasgow Media Group (1976) and Hall et al (1978) have each analyzed news gathering practices as a means by which hegemonic power relationships are reproduced.

Thus far however, the complex relationship that connects SMO collective action framing to media discourse and its hegemonic characteristics has been probed but not empirically studied. Numerous social movement scholars have cited the need for direct empirical research to further develop theoretical linkages between these phenomena (Anderson, 1993; McCarthy, 1996; Tarrow, 1992; Zald, 1996). What limited research has been performed in this area, such as Hall et al's study of primary definers (1978) has relied solely on content analysis.

SMO activists and news gatherers have not yet been directly studied.

One way to directly study SMO activists, their opponents in dominant institutions and the news gatherers who mediate contested issues is through qualitative research. Qualitative research methods have the benefit of, "sensitivity to the contexts of everyday life; their ability to explore structures of meaning among different groups through discourse analysis; and their importance for both theoretically informed case studies and the development of new theory through the continual interaction between the formulation of questions, the collection of field data and the development of new concepts" (Burgess, 1990, p. 9).

In this study, members of a social movement organization dedicated to controlling the spread of suburban sprawl in a rapidly suburbanizing county norhteast of Baltimore and members of the real estate development community who help build that low density residential housing each participated in a focus group discussion in which they discussed the collective action framing of each side of the issue, the press coverage they receive and their assessment of the local press's functioning as the Fourth Estate in the county. In addition, the editor of the local (and only) weekly newspaper in the county participated in a discussion about the newspaper's news gathering routines, the newspaper's policies regarding SMO-driven issues, and its role as a forum for the public discourse regarding land use, the single most controversial issue in the public life of Harford County, Maryland.

Collective Action Frames

According to Snow and Benford (1992, p. 137) "activists employ collective action frames to punctuate or single out some existing social condition or aspect of life and define it as unjust, intolerable and deserving of corrective action." In addition to identifying a problem, collective action frames "must imply some sense of collective efficacy...empower people by defining them as potential agents of their own history" (Gamson, 1995, p. 90). Finally, in order to galvanize public support and package a message with news appeal, a collective action frame must have a readily identifiable source for the problem. A problem caused by large systemic forces in a society lacks "concreteness in the target" (Gamson, 1992, p. 91) and is, therefore, too diffuse to enable an SMO to mobilize an agitated public or attract news coverage. History is replete with examples of misplaced sources of injustice used to mobilize publics such as Jews in Nazi Germany.

A fully articulated collective action frame must serve as catalyst for action by simplifying and condensing complex social phenomenon into something akin to an abbreviated morality tale so that it "strikes a deep, responsive chord in adherents and bystanders" (Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 140). A potent collective action frame will serve several functions. It will culturally identify the SMO, imply policy positions, imply allies and opponents, succeed in kindling the conviction of SMO followers without alienating bystanders and, ultimately, become incorporated as a mainstream cultural value (Tarrow, 1992).

The Hegemonic Structure of Media Discourse

News gatherers control what becomes news in two ways. The first way is through the imposition of news gathering routines. Items from the large, messy world of ongoing social phenomena must fit into such news gathering routines such as meeting the deadlines imposed by the news cycle (Tuchman, 1978). These items must fall under an established beat (Dunwoody et al, 1993) and not offend major advertisers (Bagdikian, 1983). They must lend themselves to simple explanation (Friedman, 1983) and they usually need to come from an established source (Fishman, 1980). Bennett (1988, p. xii) described sourcing practices as a particularly large obstacle to public participation in media discourse, stating that, "journalists will never be free of their dependence on the small group of public relations experts, official spokespersons, and powerful leaders whose self-serving pronouncements have become the bulk of the daily news."

The second form of control is more deeply cultural.

News reporting arose from the ancient tradition of storytelling (Schudson, 1991). In practice this storytelling tradition takes a form that reinforces the status quo. News is the novel event rather than the underlying social condition, news is the person rather than the group, news is visible conflict, not the deeper stirrings of social change, and news is those facts that advance the story as it is framed by the reporter, not the facts that explain or enlarge it (Gitlin, 1980).

News gatherers and the owners of news organizations generally proclaim that they operate as a progressive force in a democratic society (Bradlee, 1995). Most members of the news gathering community take pride in being a part of a thriving Fourth Estate which eliminates the few bad apples in power by exposing them. However, this episodic treatment of injustice often has the opposite effect. Each instance of exposed injustice is another self-contained event with a beginning, middle and an end, and on to the next story. According to Gamson (1995, p. 93), "The structure and operation of societal power relations remain obscure and invisible."

Theoretical Linkages: A Dominant Ideology Or A Dominant Dialogue?

Some scholars and critical theorists describe news production organizations in almost conspiratorial tones. They are described as integrated into the industrial establishment through interlocking boards and beholden to their large corporate advertisers (Bagdikian, 1983: McChesney, 1997). The news these organizations produce is described as systematically advancing the interests of the small, interrelated circle of industrial and government elites (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Gerbner et al, 1984). While this scholarship is a valuable alternative view, it may be an over-simplification. People's own experience of the news demonstrates that at least some oppositional ideas and values become incorporated into the mainstream such as the civil rights movement and the anti-war movements of the 1960s.

Both of these movements succeeded in articulating an injustice collective action frame bolstered by the compelling news visuals that civil disorder provides. Gamson and Meyer (1992, p. 288) expressed it colorfully; "fire in the belly is fine, but fire on the ground is better." The Fourth Estate's legitimizing principles of objectivity and balance require them to cover oppositional movements, even though their views and goals are detrimental to the established economic and political order (Gitlin, 1980). In the case of the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King carefully picked Birmingham, Alabama as the location for nonviolent marches because he knew that the Commissioner of Public Safety, "Bull" Connor, could be counted on to respond with violence, thereby forcing the kind of national media exposure that would galvanize movement members and win over bystanders (McCarthy, 1996).

However, examples of SMO collective action frames entering public ideological space through news media coverage and becoming incorporated as a mainstream value represent a successful minority. Far more often, SMOs are simply ignored or depicted as deviant because of their use of extreme tactics (Fishman, 1980; Gamson & Meyer, 1992). The framing skills of activists alone cannot account for admission into the media discourse. Different issues have their own "zeitgeist" based on the political circumstances of time and place (Brand, 1990, p. 2). For example, the politically centrist and mostly middle class nuclear freeze movement was able to mobilize mass demonstrations in Washington, D.C. and garner widespread news media attention during the Reagan military build-up in the early 1980s, but disappeared almost overnight as international tensions eased (Meyer, 1990).

The way in which an SMO and the press it relies upon for coverage interact is very complex. The political and cultural times must give the SMO's issue sufficient salience. Editors and reporters must regard the issue as possessing news value. The SMO must craft its collective action frame in a manner that garners attention while at the same time appears close enough to the political and cultural mainstream that the SMO cannot be easily marginalized by the press itself or the SMO's opponents. All this requires the SMO to cultivate the individual editors and reporters to establish itself as part of the news net and to gain the kind of credibility that comes from personal relationships. SMO leaders must exercise a great deal of news savvy and personal charm to match the institutionalized advantages of routine access (Galtung & Ruoge, 1965) and presumed credibility (Fishman, 1980) that their opponents possess.

Land use politics on the local level provides a valuable case study of the ways in which these dynamics operate. By studying the phenomenon on a smaller scale it is possible to find out in detail how an SMO collective action frame is developed, how well the parties involved believed it worked, and how the political climate of the community acts as an independent, and potentially confounding, variable. Focusing on a self-contained community issue also has the advantage of providing the researcher with a press that is accessable to researchers.

Method

The local land use activists interviewed in this study faced the same obstacles as larger national movements, but on a much smaller scale. In Harford County the Fourth Estate is a weekly newspaper with a circulation of 35,000. It is part of the Times-Mirror chain but the editor is a lifelong Harford county resident. He agreed to an extended interview, but did not include any reporters. A group of six land use activists, who go by the name "Friends of Harford," participated in a focus group discussion. They are all middle class and between the ages of 30 and 60. Three members of the real estate development community participated in another focus group discussion; the most active real estate lawyer in the county and unofficial spokesman for the local development industry, a local developer and a land development engineer.

In each focus group interview the researcher elicited a discussion about the land use collective action framing of each side of the issue, how each side interacts with news gatherers, how each side tries to frame the other, and how this struggle has played out on the pages of their local newspaper. Each side was also asked to discuss how it fit into individual reporters' newsnet of sources on land use issues. Finally, each side was asked to discuss how the local paper fit into the larger public discourse in the county regarding land use issues. The researcher followed the focus group procedures described by Fontana and Frey (1994).

In the one-on-one interview, the executive editor was asked to discuss his perceptions of each side's collective action frame, the news frame that appeared in print, sourcing practices on the issue, and the newspaper's role as one of the main components of the public discourse in Harford County. The researcher followed the one-on-one interview procedures described by Fontana and Frey (1994).

Each group was given a copy of the questions they would be asked in advance (Appenix A). The researcher met with the land use activist group at its regular meeting place at a local high school, met with the members of the real estate community in a law firm conference room after hour and met with the executive editor in his office. A court reporter transcribed both focus group sessions. However, the executive editor of the local weekly declined to allow his interview to be transcribed, and reluctantly agreed to participate at all. The researcher, therefore, relied on notes taken during the interview. The transcript and the interview notes are contained in Appendix B.

Results

Land Use Activist Focus Group:

Members of the activist group described the need to develop a well crafted message as one of their organization's most pressing needs. They described their frame as a call to arms in which they are telling the public that there has been too much development too fast, and something can be done to control it. They said that, to date, they have relied heavily on the local weekly to print in its Public Forum section (this newspaper's term for letters to the editor) a regular issue statement which they referred to as "Shanker-grams." The group consciously modeled these letters to the editor after the issue statements that Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers ran in newspapers across the country over the course of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. They complained, however, that too often these messages contained reactions to attacks from their opponents in the real estate development industry instead of initiating their own issues.

The group also reported that they have been pleasantly surprised by how well their concerns about over-development have been treated by the newspaper on the level of weekly reporting, but surprised at the editorial tone of the paper which they described as, "Yes, Harford County is being developed too quickly, but you can't fight City Hall." They said that they believe that this split is partly due to the fact that they have developed a rapport with reporters but not the editors, and partly because with each ascending layer in the newspaper hierchy individuals become more conservative and commercially interested.

The group added that the local newspaper's treatment of their message is not as crucial to them as it is to their opponents because, in their view, the problem is self-evident. They said that people's day-to-day lives provide plenty of evidence of over-development in the form of over-crowded schools, failing intersections and watching bulldozers level ever more scenic farms. They also pointed out that as new residents move up from Baltimore, filling the new developments, they add to the critical mass of voters who oppose further growth.

In response, according to members of the group, the real estate industry has used the local paper to advance a message of complexity - Friends of Harford is simplistic and fails to understand the complexities of real estate development in terms of necessary job creation and economic development. They described this as an effort to create public paralysis whereas their group is trying to convince the public that they can understand the issues and can do something about suburban sprawl. They believe that their message resonates with the public and that they are winning this particular framing battle.

They also identified institutional problems with the newspaper. Reporters tend to be inexperienced. There is rapid turnover, and they favor easily accessed sources. The activists reported observing a downsizing of the paper since it was sold to the Times-Mirror chain in the late 1980s, and describe the reporters as being overwhelmed. The activists said that they have learned to use this to their advantage. They said that they do their homework for the individual reporters to the point of copying voluminous documents and bringing them to the reporters with cover memos. According to them, reporters readily use this information subsidy and often accept the news frame that the activists supply with it. The activists are then placed firmly in the newsnet.

However, the activists point out that producing well researched and documented news subsidies is a tremendous amount of work, so they have to choose issues for that treatment very selectively. The issues that they do not cover as surrogate investigative reporters, according to them, remain invisible to members of the press and are thus never included in media discourse. They also said that despite the successes they have had in establishing themselves as a legitimate source, they have observed a recurring tone in the coverage of their organization that they described as "those kids acting up again." Finally, they said that often they get the impression that they have succeeded in persuading an individual reporter of the news value of their point of view only to discover it missing from the story that goes to print, as though the news copy has been heavily edited.

Executive Editor Interview:

The editor said that activists do research that "a newspaper would never do," and acknowledged that staffing limits affected the amount of research the paper could conduct. He added that the paper welcomes this research as long as it is factually accurate. He said that, from his experience, twenty percent of what activists give provide is "spin," but a sincere form of spin because, he said, activists truly do not see that there is another side to their issue. He said that the same holds true for real estate developers. He added that his reporters do their own digging too, and used as an example the fact that he had sent a reporter to Ohio to investigate the community impacts of a NASCAR racetrack similar to one proosed for Harford County.

The editor also said that the biggest problem that the paper has with conflicts between activist groups and proposed real estate developments is that "each side just wants to win, and lose sight of the original issue." He said that the conflict becomes personal, and the press "has to become a muzzle...the organ that brings the emotional level down." He added that these conflicts are highly local in nature. Larger philosophical issues do not enter into them, it is as simple as: "Did I get my rezoning or not, did my neighbor? He said that the land use activists he deals with are equally parochial in their interests. He referred to the activists as NIMBY's (Not In My Back Yard); adding, "People think they bought their viewscape along with their house."

On the issue of newspaper access, he said that whenever an issue becomes the subject of sustained complaint, the newspaper covers it. And, he said, even the most minor of issues can be placed in the paper simply by writing a letter for inclusion in the Open Forum. He confirmed that the Friends of Harford activists frequently approach his reporters and that his reporters generally take the initative with real estate developers.

Finally, on the subject of advertiser pressure (the real estate industry provides the paper with one third of its advertising revenues), he said that an advertiser's objections to running a story will be entertained, but no more so than anyone else's would be. He gave examples of stories having been run despite advertiser objections and examples of advertisers retaliating by withdrawing their ads.

He concluded the interview by stating that he measured his success at covering land use issues in the county by the fact that both sides complain about the coverage. He described the newspaper's role as central to the public discourse on land use and highly constructive.

Real Estate Developers Interview:

This group said that they have no orchestrated collective action frame. The said that any frame that may exist is haphazardly arrived at as a result of reporters calling them up and asking questions. They added that they do not cultivate the reporters in any way, but merely take their calls. They said that these reporters tend to be fresh out of college and in no more versed in land use issues than members of the general public. As a result, they said, the public discourse on land use occurs on two levels, the rarefied policy discussions that occur between the developers and the land use activists, and the "dumbed down" version that both sides use with the general public and the press.

They agreed with the activists that the weekly news reporting mildly favors the land use activists, but is usually inaccurate and often takes erratic swings in either direction. They added that the editorials on land use are no better, they reflect an elementary understanding of land use and also swing erratically However, they said that press coverage, favorable or unfavorable was unimportant to them. They said that they take for granted that reporters will cover "people up in arms," but do not worry about it because, in their view, the newspaper has only a very minor role in shaping public opinion or influencing elected officials. They said that they are far more concerned about their rapport with elected officials and community association leaders associated with their individual development projects.

They added that they do not believe that the public at large ever engage the larger philosophical issues, such as the appropriate balance between private property rights and land use planning as part of the social contract. The real estate lawyer said, "We don't have to sell growth, it's there, it happens without us. It's not something that we need to reach out to the public at large and convince them that this is a program that they ought to participate in...Growth is inevitable."

Conclusions

Fontana and Frey (1994) refer to a subtext, which eludes easy recounting, present in any interview. Facial expression, tone of voice and proxemics are all suggestive of attitudes and an emotional tone such as openness, earnestness, defensiveness or wariness. This subtext was evident in the interviews in this study and are relevant to conclusions regarding the complex interactions between SMO collective action framers and the press. With both focus groups, the discussion occurred in an atmosphere of openness and the researcher sensed a real eagerness on the part of the participants to grapple with the questions before them. By contrast the press interview was more subdued and cautious in tone. It was also conspicuously less informative. In fact, at one point during the difficult negotiations to arrange an interview at all, the editor said, "You're a reporter for the academic community, and we don't talk to reporters." The extent to which this presumption of an adversarial relationship is due to journalists' professional socialization and occupational exposure to the wariness of many of their sources cannot be known.

However, the wariness of the editor during the interview underscored the split in his message between what Gitlin (1980, p. 250) described as the "mirror approach" to journalism, popular among editors in the 1960s, in which they characterize their role as holding a mirror up to reality, and a discernible condescension in his characterization of local land use activists. The form of the interview with its lack of access to reporters suggested a split between his allowing scholarly access to the newspaper while, at the same time, carefully controlling it.

These interviews suggest that the literature is correct in describing the obstacles to SMOs as greater than routine news sources when it comes to getting the media exposure that they require to communicate with the public and to establish their legitimacy. These interviews reveal that real estate developers do, in fact, get routine access to the press while SMOs have to go to extraordinary lengths to cultivate the press, including providing elaborate news subsidies. Without them, they would have to settle for mere inclusion in the cacophonous Public Forum. It is as though activists have a greater coefficient of friction to overcome to gain entry to this arena, comparable to having a steeper hill to climb than their opponents.

This inequality in ease of access may be due to an underlying attitude among members of the press which the editor articulated as a belief that land use activists are just a bunch of NIMBYs, no more concerned with the larger public interest than the average real estate developer. It may also be the case that the activists really do personalize public policy issues in a manner that compromises their credibility. Only an ethnography of land use activists, including participation in meetings with the press, could provide a definitive answer.

To whatever degree these two factors are at work and interact with each other, the fact remains that the spread of suburban sprawl through Harford County has been inexorable. Whereas in England, a rural county located 25 miles away from a similar city, such as Sheffield, would retain its pattern of hamlets, lower Harford County is already an unbroken extension of suburban Baltimore. This pattern of residential development is a social construction. The public at large expresses its will by establishing a political climate that affects the kinds of land use laws that can be passed. In 1964 Parliament passed a town and countryside preservation law in response to public sentiment. In 1996 Maryland passed a law called Smart Growth which, by comparison, imposes extremely modest restrictions on sprawl development.

It is to the underlying factors of weak legal restrictions preventing, and inexorable economic pressures promoting sprawl development that the real estate developers were alluding to when they suggested that Harford County's weekly newspaper is largely irrelevant to land use policy making. This is a different form of hegemony than was discussed earlier in this paper. This appears to be a product of the interlocking set of taken-for-granted ideological propositions which Hall (1982) described as directing the political climate of a capitalist society because of its embeddedness in the core of the culture. People who migrate from densely populated cities create a market for single family homes built in a grid pattern punctuated by cul de sacs so that every homeowner can have a quarter-acre of well-tended lawn. Real estate developers merely capitalize on it. This desire for a piece of one's own land is a product of this core ideology and requires an explanation on the level of general social theory.

A more manageable form of hegemony is also at work in this newspaper's role in mediating Harford County land use conflicts. Reporting on land use issues is performed by recent college graduates with degrees in journalism. It is the experience of the researcher, who teaches advanced journalism courses at the university that provides this newspaper with the majority of its new hires, that the complexities of land use issues on the county level are entirely unfamirialr to them. In addition, when this newspaper made the transition from family ownership and management to chain ownership staff was reduced and salaries were cut. Harford County's Fourth Estate must now earn the prevailing market return on a quarter by quarter basis in order to match what is available from "a shirt factory in Thailand to the latest Internet startup" (Fallows, 1996, p. 15). Time for enterprise reporting and money for seasoned reporters is simply not possible under such financial imperatives.

Deeper analysis of the health of the Fourth Estate in small newspaper markets and the affect that has on SMO participation in the public discourse in those markets would require not only an extended ethnography of the SMOs in question, but a newsroom ethnography of the local newspaper in the tradition of Breed (1965), Gans (1979) and Tuchman (1978). Ultimately, as Gamson (1995 p. 104) put it; "The good news for movement activists is that media discourse is only one resource. Selectively integrated with other resources - especially experiential knowledge - it remains a central component in the construction of collective action frames." Or, as one of the activists in the focus group expressed it, "We're hitting on things that are really quite obvious, like ailing intersections, overcrowded schools and fatality rates."

The socially constructed reality of the media discourse concerning sprawl must, at some point, reflect the physical reality of a politically critical mass of drivers backed up at those failing intersections and parents dropping off their children at those over-crowded schools. At that point, the SMO collective action frame and the news frame converge. That may turn out to represent the true limit on sprawl development in Harford County and the larger economic hegemony that propels it.

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APPENDIX A

Land Use Activist Questions

1. How would you describe the message that FoH is sending to the community, elected officials and members of the press?

   A. To what extent does it need to be adapted for each audience?

2. How was it formulated and what were your major considerations?

   A. How much complexity had to be sacrificed in order to give it persuasive value?

3. How would you describe the message formulated by your opponents?

   A. How much complexity do you believe they sacrificed?

4. Has The Aegis framed the message in a way the favors either side?

   A. How much complexity have they sacrificed to give it news appeal?

5. How does FoH maintain a rapport with the press?

   A. To what extent do you have to seek out reporters and editors versus their going to you?

6. How does FoH reach out to elected officials and the public at large?

   A. What is the relative value of each of these audiences in accomplishing your goals?

7. In what specific ways have your opponents tried to twist your message or malign FoH?

   A. Which audience does your do your opponents appear to emphasize in their efforts?

8. In your opinion, how much effect does the fact that the real estate industry provides The Aegis with one third of their advertising revenues effect its portrayal of land use issues?

9. To what extent does The Aegis appear to have incorporated the change in public attitudes concerning balancing private property rights with the right of communities to have some control over their destiny?

10. How important is timing? For example, do land use issues only become newsworthy during comprehensive rezoning?

Questions Concerning Land Use Policy and the Press

1. How would you describe the message that the shelter industry tries to send to the public at large and to the press?

   A. To what extent does it need to be adapted for each audience?

2. How does this message get formulated and what are the major considerations?

   A. Do you believe that the shelter industry should engage in a more coordinated effort?

   B. How much complexity has to be sacrificed in order to give it persuasive value?

3. How would you describe the message formulated by your opponents?

   A. How much complexity do you believe they sacrifice?

4. Has The Aegis framed the message in a way the favors either side?

   A. How much complexity have they sacrificed to give it news appeal?

5. Does the shelter industry actively maintain a rapport with the press?

   A. To what extent do you have to seek out reporters and editors versus them going to you?

6. How does the shelter industry reach out to the public at large?

   A. Does your experience suggest that the public discourse is centered more in press accounts or in individuals' personal networks?

7. In what ways might your opponents have tried to mischaracterize your message or malign the shelter industry through the press?

   A. If they have tried, have they been successful at it?

8. How do you respond to critics who assert that the fact that the shelter industry provides The Aegis with significant advertising revenues might affect the paper's portrayal of land use issues?

9. Have you noticed any shift in public attitudes concerning the proper balance of private property rights and the desire of leaders of some communities to exert control over their community's density and overall character?

   A. If so, is it reflected in *The Aegis*?

11. How important is timing? For example, do land use issues only become newsworthy during comprehensive rezoning?

News Gatherer Questions

1. When you write stories about controversial public policy issues, such as land use policy, how do you select sources, and over time do they form a "news net"?

2. To what extent, based on your own experience, do these sources attempt to add their own spin and thereby manipulate what becomes the news on these issues?

3. When this happens, can you generally call them on it and insist that they be straight with you or do you usually sort out the spin element by yourself based on other interviews and the facts you have gathered?

4. At what point does a citizens' group qualify as a legitimate source? What characteristics aid in this recognition? Degree of organization? Longevity? Articulateness? Reasonableness of positions?

5. When covering controversial issues, does talking to different people in the same organization usually lead to a diversity of views or do you find that different individuals within a single organization usually say basically the same thing?

    A. If it depends on the organization, which type of organization tends to do which?

    B. To what extent to these organizations require you to rely on a single source trained in talking to reporters such as an official spokesperson or public relations professional?

6. Public policy controversies often involve complex underlying issues. For example, land use policy pits basic concepts of private property rights against a community's right to control its character and its destiny. To what extent do these more rarefied issues lend themselves to treatment in a weekly newspaper?

7. Over the last ten years or so have you noticed any discernible shift in the way the public in Harford County thinks about private property rights versus community rights?

    A. To the extent this has occurred, how does this shift get translated into changes in newspaper coverage?

8. How would you respond to critics who point out that special interests (such as the real estate industry in the case of land use issues) are a major source of advertising revenue for a local newspaper? While only the most extreme critics would claim that direct pressure occurs, many more moderate critics believe that more subtle forms of self-censorship

occur either consciously or unconsciously.

9. All parties to controversial public issues seem to like to blame the media for portraying their side in the least flattering light. How would you describe your role in keeping the public informed and maintaining fairness?

Building a heartline to America:

Quiz shows and the ideal of audience participation in early broadcasting

Olaf Hoerschelmann, Ph.D.
2216 Longmeadow St.
Denton, TX 76201
(940) 369-7327 (office)
(940) 565-2518 (Fax)
(940) 898-8516 (home)
Email: Olafh@unt.edu

Building a Heartline to America:

Quiz Shows and the Ideal of Audience Participation in Early Broadcasting

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Qualitative Studies Division

Abstract

This article investigates the development of quiz shows as experimental forms to explore the relationship between broadcast institutions, media texts, and audiences. During this period of instability in the broadcast industry, quiz shows create a particularly close and involved relationship with radio and television audiences. While early quiz shows thus offer unusual forms of interaction and participation for the audience, the stabilization of the network system in the early fifties changed the form and meaning of the genre and limited the audience to a more restricted viewing position.

Building a heartline to America:

Quiz shows and the ideal of audience participation in early broadcasting

The relation of the broadcast industry to its audiences has always been complicated and contradictory. While the phrase "selling audiences to advertisers (cf. Ang 1991, p. ix)" is often used to sum up the role of broadcasters in the media industry, it hardly explains the complexities of television audience activity or the relationship between media texts and their viewers. While there has been a significant amount of ethnographic studies on television audiences and institutional conceptions of audiences (e.g. Morley 1986, Morley 1992, Ang 1991, Seiter et al. 1989, Moores 1993), media history and criticism has not necessarily focused on the ways in which texts are constructed to address their audiences.

In this article, I will therefore focus on the early development of one genre, quiz shows, in radio and television between the late thirties and the mid-fifties. Because of specific institutional demands of the developing broadcast industry, the quiz show genre encouraged forms of audience participation which set it apart as a unique site for the exploration of text-audience relationships by the industry. Through an analysis of both industry discourses and individual quiz shows, I hope to illuminate the unusual form and appeal of the genre at a specific and crucial moment in the history of broadcasting. The transition from radio to television, occurring between the late forties and early fifties, will provide a particularly interesting site for the investigation of changes in the genre.

Quiz shows and talk shows are the only forms of broadcasting that do not originate outside of the broadcast system. All other broadcast formats seem to develop out of variety, theater, and film (Hilmes 1990). It can be argued that quiz and talk shows are the programming forms that are most central to and most characteristic of broadcasting, yet they seem to be the least studied as well. Theories that emphasize the centrality of various forms of theater, e.g. vaudeville, or Hollywood for the development of television are thus ignoring two of the core genres of broadcasting. While media historians have begun to trace the multiple influences on the production of radio programming (Smulyan 1987; Smulyan 1994; Allen 1985; Hilmes 1997), specifically the relation of Hollywood and radio (Jewell 1984; Hilmes 1990), many other aspects of the development of radio broadcasting are still not adequately covered.

Since the development of radio quiz shows coincides with the fundamental solidification of commercial broadcasting, the relationship of this genre to commercial forces such as advertisers and sponsors warrants specific attention. The quiz show is the first broadcast genre which was created primarily by sponsors and advertising agencies. At this early point in the history of quiz shows, sponsors and advertisers were able to shape the genre to address their specific needs and interests, thus bringing the logic of commercial broadcasting to an extreme. Many advertising agencies had their own radio departments and major sponsors, such as *Procter and Gamble*, expanded their radio production departments throughout the thirties (Hilmes 1990, p. 83).

One of the major problems for advertisers in the thirties was that their understanding of the audience for broadcast programs was still undeveloped. Allen (1985) shows how soap opera producers dealt with the same problem in the early thirties. Irna Phillips, creator of some of the earliest soap operas, introduced "mailhooks," offers for free publicity photos or merchandise samples which were placed within the soap opera narratives. Phillips wanted to encourage the audience to write postcards requesting the free products, so that it would be possible to gain a better understanding of audience size and composition, as well as their involvement in the program. Mailhooks were thus the first attempts of the broadcast industry to elicit feedback from the audience. The desire to understand and control the audience led Procter and Gamble, the largest producer of soap operas, to "institute an unparalleled program of market research to assure that its advertising budget was spent as efficiently as possible" (Allen 1985, p. 115).

Similar to the mailhooks used on soap operas, advertisers and sponsors also attempted to elicit audience feedback on quiz shows. They encouraged audience members to call in on radio quiz shows and participate in the game and also emphasized the participatory character of the shows. Early quiz shows relied heavily on the incorporation of everyday people and elements of everyday life into the programs. While this created a close relationship between audiences and programs and served some of the economic needs of quiz show producers, it also created an emphasis on cultural forms of low distinction. Consequently, debates over the cultural role of quiz shows were informed by the tensions and conflicts which are present in the field of cultural distinction (Bourdieu 1984).

The first radio quiz shows premiered on American radio on three different networks (MBS, CBS, and NBC Blue) in 1936. The quiz show genre was thus first introduced to radio at the precise historical point when the commercial structure of broadcasting was fully established. In 1934, the foundation of the Federal Communications Commission in combination with the 1934 Communications Act and the defeat of the Wagner-Hatfield amendment to this act provided a legislative and regulatory structure for broadcasting in the United States which would not challenge its commercial and network-dominated structure. While the 1934 Communications Act claims that broadcasters have to serve "the public interest, convenience, or necessity," this sentence was usually taken by the FCC to mean "whatever profits the industry profits the public (MacDonald 1994, p. 23)." Thus, McChesney points out that at this point, the "consolidation of the status quo was complete. Congress would never again consider fundamental structural questions in its communications deliberations. The legitimacy of network-dominated, advertising-supported broadcasting was now off-limits as a topic of congressional scrutiny (McChesney 1994, p. 224)." The significance of this development is even greater when we take into consideration that the structure of radio broadcasting also provided an important framework for the debates over the future of television. However, it seems problematic to argue that "television was a function of broadcasting and the natural outgrowth of radio (MacDonald 1994, p. 22)." Despite the extremely clear development of television toward a commercial structure, I would like to emphasize the contested character of the debates over the future of television.

For example, Lichty (1989) emphasizes the central importance of radio in the development of television, but fails to acknowledge other influences present in this process. In contrast, Jowett (1994) argues that the way in which television was originally presented to the public had a fundamental influence on the development of the medium. The different perspectives on television in the thirties and forties reflect the divergent interests of the institutions and individuals involved. David Sarnoff, president of RCA, the parent company of NBC, created a discourse that seemingly naturally connects radio and television as broadcast media (cf. Jowett 1994, p. 122).

> We now begin the second decade of this new art by dedicating it to the achievement of television, the broadcasting of sight. It is the only prophecy I shall indulge in tonight--that during the next 10 years the millions who now listen in their homes to this celebration will

> be able to see as well as hear by radio (Sarnoff 1936, November 15, p. 13).

Sarnoff's institutional discourse on television as *broadcasting* of sight tended to frame the more popular/public discussions of the new medium. Thus, the dominant forces in the media industries of the thirties and forties were able to set up the discussions of television in their favor, that is, in Raymond Williams' (1977) terms they were able to exert specific pressures and set certain limits to the discussion of the form of television in American culture.

> Thus, these early presentations on television to the American public, especially those emanating from the radio broadcasting and electronics industries, had the effect of delimiting the area of discussion about television to a perimeter within the industrial, political and cultural control of these industries (Jowett 1994, p. 123).

The development of early broadcasting since the early twenties, and the history of radio in particular, was framed by the demands of private business and the ideology of free enterprise. Especially since the FCC was neither willing nor able to change its established regulatory pattern developed in the context of radio for the emerging television medium, the broadcast industry was able to focus discussions of the future of television on a discourse which was particularly advantageous for its commercial interests. As Jowett (1994, p. 133) points out, the creation of a seemingly natural connection between radio and television through the metaphor of visual or sight broadcasting serves to articulate television to the existing interests of RCA and the radio industry in general.

Robert Sherwood accurately predicted the development of television in Scribner's Magazine in 1929, drawing a parallel between the development of advertiser-supported radio and the future of television as an advertising-based medium:

> [When radio was lacking sufficient funds to sustain attractive programs], the national advertisers stepped in with their subsidies.... Radio advertising has not been a transitory fad. It has grown, steadily and substantially, and it will continue to grow.... Radio advertising has naturally been limited because of its inability to give listeners a 'picture of the product.' Television, needless to say, will remedy it (Sherwood 1929, pp. 6-7).

The general predictions of television becoming an advertiser supported medium were particularly clear in those instances where the radio industry was trying to attract advertisers or keep them loyal to radio. A speech by David Sarnoff to the American Federation of Advertisers in 1936 exemplifies both the clear connections that he constructs between radio and television and the strong interest of the RCA president to entice advertisers to support the new medium. Sarnoff sees television as the most effective advertising medium available for the industry: "The benefits which have resulted from the industrial sponsorship of sound broadcasting indicate that our major television programs will come from the same source. It requires little imagination to see the advertising opportunities in television (Sarnoff 1936, July 15, p. 10)." Sarnoff thus not only extolls the virtues of commercial broadcasting, he also predicts that advertisers or sponsors would remain a driving force in the creation of broadcast television programming.

As Hilmes' (1990; 1997) historical studies of early radio show, Sarnoff's predictions were accurate. By the mid-thirties, networks were primarily seen as 'conduits' for sponsors and agencies. Thus, networks are not the primary creator of programming in this period. Instead, advertising agencies and large national sponsors were usually in charge of producing programming and placing it in specific slots in the network broadcast schedule. Hilmes (1990) observes an increasing dominance of advertising agencies in the selling of commercial broadcast time between 1933 and 1945, which corresponds to a significant overall increase in the percentage of commercially sponsored programs.

> By 1944, evening hours consisted almost entirely of sponsored programs. In terms of concentration of advertising and programming power within the agencies themselves, by 1944 three of the nation's largest advertising agencies between them controlled about one-fourth of total commercial time on the three major networks (Hilmes 1990, p. 82).

The dominance of sponsors and advertising agencies in broadcast programming also made the radio networks extremely uneasy. NBC in particular had little control over its broadcast schedule in the early thirties. While NBC charged affiliates for sustaining programming and paid a flat fee to its affiliates for airing sponsored programming, CBS shared 30% of its national advertising revenues and provided free sustaining programming in exchange for option time during prime-time. Thus, CBS had more control over network operations and better profits than NBC, which adopted this model in 1935. However, the control over the production of programming was still a central problem for radio networks in the thirties and forties:

> By the mid-1930s neither CBS nor NBC produced much of its prime-time radio programming, which was generally produced or licensed by national sponsors who controlled a specific "time franchise" on a network schedule. This was an industry practice that CBS was determined to challenge when the television era began (Boddy 1990a, p. 65).

Another consequence of the tension between advertisers and networks was the issue of the cultural role for radio broadcasting. Advertisers usually had very specific interests in the production of programming, that is, the creation of an effective vehicle for commercial messages, which overruled any other concerns. Thus, the commercial structure of broadcasting frequently generated anxieties among dominant cultural groups (Baughman 1987). Consequently, Jackaway (1990) claims that elite appropriations of broadcasting for spreading elite culture in support of cultural hierarchies were frequently undermined by the commercial orientation of broadcasting. While the National Association of Broadcasters, trying to address this tension, resolved to "foster and promote the commonly accepted moral, social and ethical values of American life (Jackaway 1990, p. 192)," the practice of integrating these values into the content of American broadcasting often seemed to be inadequate.

> Because market interests clearly lay in programming for the largest audience, the cultural agenda of the elites was incompatible with the economics of advertising-supported mass media. The dilemma facing these tastemakers was that the programming which they considered to be most cultural was also in fact the least profitable (Jackaway 1990, p. 190-191).

The mass media are thus constantly part of the shifting field of cultural distinctions. On the one hand, there are frequent attempts to incorporate elements of high distinction, including elite cultural forms such as opera, classical literature and drama, or fine art into the media to enlighten the 'mass audience'. On the other hand, the popular tastes of this mass audience seems to be siding with cultural forms of low distinction, such as vulgar comedy, sports, and other 'trivial' forms of popular culture.

In the context of discussions of the cultural value of broadcasting, quiz shows seem to occupy a particularly interesting position. While the genre does not seem to be valued as such, its potential to articulate elite hierarchies of knowledge and education makes it attractive as a possible site for the application of dominant cultural discourses. J. Fred MacDonald points out that "in the 1930s radio realized the esthetic extremes of its programming (1979, p. 47)." In contrast to the critically valued dramatic series, audience participation shows for MacDonald seem to embody the low or popular extreme in this dichotomy. While the term *audience participation* for MacDonald (1979) includes any show which "utilized people in the studio or listening audience to provide the substance of the programs (1979, p. 47)," a look at the listing of quiz and audience participation programs in Swartz and Reinehr's *Handbook of Old-Time Radio* (1993, pp. 139-147) makes it clear that more than 90% of audience participation programs can be regarded as quiz shows, since they were involved in playful tests of various types of knowledge and skills, included different forms of competition, and awarded different sorts of prizes to contestants. MacDonald (1979) observes that one of the main appeals of radio quiz shows seems to be their close connection to the audience, both in terms of the interaction of home or studio audience with the program and in terms of the identification of the audience with contestants who seemed to be just like them:

"[A]mateurism was a democratic form of radio amusement. It was the average citizen entertaining his colleagues. It was as close as an audience came to controlling directly the content of its own programming (MacDonald 1979, p. 48)." While it seems problematic to argue that the radio audience actually ever had a significant degree of control over the creation of quiz programs, the observation that there is an unique relationship between quiz shows and their audience is still of central importance.

This unique relationship seems to be one of the most interesting findings of Herta Herzog (1940) in her article *Professor Quiz-A Gratification Study*. While *Professor Quiz* (CBS, ABC

1936-1948) was not the first radio quiz show--two less popular spelling-bee type shows, *Old-Time Spelling Bee* (MBS 1936-1937) and *Uncle Jim's Question Bee* (NBC Blue 1936-1941) preceded it--it has received the most critical attention of all the early radio quiz shows. On *Professor Quiz*, five members of the studio audience competed against each other through several rounds of question-and-answer periods for a final cash reward. In addition, the home audience could also submit questions for the candidates for which they were awarded cash prizes. Public discussion of this show frequently focused on its educational appeal, thus assuming that this program could function to significantly enlighten its listeners. Herzog (1940) hints both at the program's popularity and at its presumed educational appeal:

> The program "Professor Quiz" was analyzed because it is a type of highly successful quiz broadcast regarded by many of the radio public as "educational." ... "Professor Quiz" has a very large audience, and, in a general way, one can easily account for his success. Such programs have a multiple appeal: different aspects of them appeal to different people (Herzog 1940, p. 64).

Herzog finds that quiz show listeners are highly involved with the shows, listing (1) the competitive appeal, (2) the educational appeal, (3) the self-rating appeal, and (4) the sporting appeal as the main lines of identification with the program. However, her overall analysis indicates that the educational appeal seems to be of much lower importance for the audience than the various forms of interaction that she observes; education often serves as a culturally desirable pretense for the audience to listen to the program. Listeners thus prefer the competition and identification with people like themselves in quiz shows:

> It turns out that all of our respondents prefer the contestants to be average people. They

> say: 'It is expected of college people that they know everything. I would not want to compete with them.' 'I prefer the people on the program to be people like myself. Now, you take a lawyer--I would not try to compete with him.' The respondents stress emphatically, then, that the quiz contest is a contest between average people, and they would not be at all interested in competition with people that are not average (Herzog, 1940, pp. 68-69).

Listeners thus seem to be much more interested in a cultural product that reflects some of their own values and their own identity. They very likely would resist a strong emphasis on explicit elite values and cultural discourses in quiz shows. Part of the reason why radio quiz shows are attractive to their listeners thus seems to be their ability to address the common practices and experiences of the audience. Following Fiske's (1989) definition of popular culture texts as products which can be appropriated by audiences for anti-hegemonic uses, radio quiz shows seem to have a highly popular appeal for their--primarily subordinate--listeners. The interviews by Herzog demonstrate that the contests in the show are often conceived in terms such as "people like myself" or "average people" competing against "them", the "college people" or other representatives of official knowledge and formal education, for example teachers. Thus, Herzog claims that "questions of a 'specific', 'academic', or 'foreign' nature would be less stimulating than those on 'daily life information' (p. 70)." This indicates that the listeners of *Professor Quiz* which are described in Herzog's study are actually attempting to negotiate a more advantageous position for themselves within the hegemonic system of cultural/educational distinction (Bourdieu 1984). They are not necessarily interested in overthrowing the system of cultural hierarchies as such, but they are trying to increase the relative value of their own knowledge and educational capital. This seems to be the reason why the knowledge required in *Professor Quiz* is particularly attractive:

> The questions are not very academic or technical; they deal with things taught in school or known from daily life. The listeners state quite frankly that they would neither be interested in any other type of questions nor be able to answer them. 'The questions are not necessarily on an academic subject. That is what I like about it. Of course, if they would be highly specialized, I would not know them; but they are things you pick up in daily life (Herzog, p. 71).'

While listeners of *Professor Quiz* clearly prefer questions related to everyday life, the program still manages to integrate more difficult or specialized questions which relate to high cultural capital. Consequently, the program is also sometimes called *Professor Quiz and his Brainbusters* and billed a "battle of wits" (Swartz and Reinehr, 1993). This implicit element of hierarchical knowledge is often represented even in the titles of radio quiz shows, using the high cultural capital of Doctors and Professors. Many radio quiz shows thus seem to be structured by and representative of the dual desires for cultural prestige and popularity.

Dr. I.Q., also known as *Dr. I.Q., the Mental Banker*, attempts to integrate categories referring to traditional educational capital, such as history, geography, and geometry as well as a number of categories relating to common or everyday knowledge, such as popular songs, comic strips, current events, tongue twisters, and riddles. Although a few questions are sent in by home listeners, the element of participation by the home audience is not very prominent in this program. *Dr. I.Q.* is particularly interesting because it does not use a panel of authoritative experts at all. Instead, the entire show is structured around the host, that is, Dr. I.Q., asking questions to members of the studio audience. To achieve a strong level of integration of the studio audience in

Dr. I.Q., assistants to the "Doctor" are spread throughout the theater to locate contestants in a seemingly random manner and reward correct answers with silver dollars. *Dr. I.Q.* thus creates an impression of the studio audience as average people who are representative of the larger home audience. It also makes a strong effort to present questions that relate to the audience's experience of everyday life without sacrificing an appeal to the educational character of quiz shows.

While the actual integration of the home audience is not particularly effective in *Dr. I.Q.*, many other shows, and *Information Please* in particular, make great efforts at integrating the home audience. All of the questions on *Information Please* are taken from listener mail. For every question used on the show a listener received $10, a copy of the '*Information Please* Quiz Book' and, if the question "stumped the experts", the listener was rewarded with another $25 and a complete 24 volume set of the Encyclopedia Britannica. Although the audience is thus in some way involved in the construction of this program, the process of selecting and assembling the questions still seems to be informed by the need to create a program which is popular, yet educational, so that the questions on *Information Please* are not fundamentally different from questions on *Dr. I.Q.* or *Professor Quiz*. Nevertheless, part of the appeal of *Information Please* seems to be the opportunity for audience members to influence the content of the show.

Another pleasurable aspect of *Information Please* is implied in the format of the show, that is, its reversal of the logic of dominant cultural and educational hierarchies. In *Information Please*, the audience at least symbolically plays an important role in the definition of desirable cultural knowledge and achieves a superior position toward the expert panel. Thus, the opening announcement states: "It's time to wake up America and stump the experts." To some extent, *Information Please* thus symbolically makes the home audience the primary source of knowledge and puts it in a limited position of authority in relation to the studio panelists. While the required forms of knowledge in this quiz and the existence of a designated panel of *experts* indicate that traditional cultural hierarchies have not been dissolved and still structure the program to some extent, *Information Please* still creates a discursive space in which a reversal of cultural hierarchies is possible and in which the listening audience is at least symbolically involved in the production of the program.

Audience participation in radio quiz shows serves as a discursive strategy which creates a particularly close relationship between audience and text. It is driven by the advertisers' desire to control and understand the radio broadcast audience. The instability of the radio audience in the thirties induced advertisers and sponsors to encourage audience activity and participation. While this close relationship between audiences and texts might serve the advertisers' commercial interests, a reevaluation of the evidence provided by Herzog (1940) indicates that the primary pleasures of the audience seem to lie in the possibility to renegotiate their position within the system of cultural distinction.

While radio quiz shows continued to play an important role on radio up to the early fifties, much of the history of the genre overlaps with the introduction of television in the forties. Although RCA and its subsidiary NBC originally initiated regular public television service in 1939, the FCC did not allow commercial sponsors at that point, especially since there was no unified technical standard for television transmissions and reception (Jowett 1994, p. 127). After this initial phase, the FCC allowed limited commercial broadcasting in 1940, and in 1941 the National Television System Committee (NTSC) accepted RCA's technical standards for broadcast television. In 1942, WWII forbade further expansion of TV. When television was starting to expand into national service, after WWII and in the early fifties, both its technical standards and its economic base were well established. While RCA was extremely successful in making its technical standards generally accepted and was thus able to give substantial financial assistance to NBC, NBC's main competitor, CBS, was not able to set up a profitable television receiver production unit and ultimately lost out to RCA in the struggles over the technical standards for television. Thus, the production of programming and the sale of advertising time on radio and television became the main source of income for CBS. One of the ways in which CBS tried to improve its position in the broadcast industry was through recruiting some of NBC's top radio talent in the late forties with very attractive financial deals, a strategy often referred to as the "talent raids (cf. Boddy 1990a)." The talent raids were not only intended to enhance CBS' position in radio, but also to provide CBS with an attractive set of performers for television, so that the CBS 1949 Annual Report states that

> the major new CBS programs...such as Amos 'n' Andy, Jack Benny, Bergen and McCarthy, Ozzie and Harriet, Bing Crosby, Red Skelton...not only have established value as radio entertainment, but are also particularly well suited to the requirements of television (Boddy 1990a, p. 71).

While hosts of radio quiz shows were generally not part of the talent raids, mainly because advertising agencies rather than networks were in control of their contracts and because most radio quiz shows were not centered around the personality of a specific host, the issue of the rise of television and its potential to replace radio as a central entertainment medium in American life was certainly on the mind of many radio personalities. As guest star on *Information Please* (Nov. 15, 1940) the radio comedian and future television quiz show host Fred Allen engaged in the following dialogue with the show's host, Clifton Fadiman:

> FADIMAN: You know, the radio audience can't see what you're doing with your hands, Mr. Allen.
>
> ALLEN: I'm rehearsing for television; I'm looking ahead....I'm prepared if it comes.
>
> FADIMAN: What a perspective opens up before you, Mr. Allen. ...
>
> ALLEN: Quite a joke we're gonna have with this cast when television comes.

The dialogue shows the potential of television as a visual medium to make the quiz show genre more attractive, but it also hints at some of the problems which would be associated with the transfer of individual shows--or personalities--from radio to television. Elaborating on these transfer problems, Jowett (1994) even claims that many of the aesthetic problems that television faced in the late fifties and early sixties stem from the uncritical transfer of radio broadcast content into a new cultural form. Thus, he argues that many of the early programming formats on television did not take the specific aesthetic requirements of television sufficiently into account.

While there are numerous books from the thirties and forties discussing the future of television, especially its technology and economics, few of these also consider the aesthetic aspects of television or specific genres. Judy Dupuy's 1945 book *Television Show Business* comments about difficulties in producing quiz shows:

> Quizzes and games can be visual fun when they are planned and staged for the television camera (p. 91). ... Quizzes and games which seem so simple to present on television are a challenge to the producer. Some day, however, an ingenious producer will find a visual format that is effective (p. 96).

While Dupuy thus fails to give any indication of what quiz shows in a visually oriented medium might look like, another book, Thomas Hutchinson's *Here is Television* (1946) stresses two points in his suggestions for quiz shows: First, he reiterates the general importance of visualizing a program and second, he emphasizes the distinct element of audience involvement necessary for a successful quiz show:

> It is difficult to include the audience in contests of this kind [quiz shows], and yet a way to accomplish this must be found. Aside from either knowing or not knowing the answer, if the viewer at home has no way of entering into the game he really is merely an observer. It is true that this same situation exists in radio, but television being visual should offer more (Hutchinson 1946, p. 154).

For Hutchinson, audience involvement or participation thus becomes a central part of the aesthetics of the quiz show genre, so that he sees the visual structure of quiz shows as centered around an intense audience involvement. Yet, Hutchinson has only very few concrete suggestions as to how audience involvement can be encouraged, mainly through the creation of sympathies for contestants and by withholding the answer to a riddle ahead of time, so that the audience is "in the same position as the people in the studio (p. 156)."

In general, producers of television quiz shows in the late forties and early fifties seem to have structured their shows along the lines that Hutchinson suggests. Virtually all of the shows from this period attempt to integrate the studio and home audience in some way. Two of the oldest television quiz shows available in archives, *Americana* (1949) and *Quiz Kids* (1949), both rely entirely on viewer mail for their pool of questions. Although the technical problems of live broadcasting probably prevented these shows from using and integrating a studio audience, *Americana* in particular makes an effort to integrate the home audience through some verbal cues:

> ANNOUNCER: Your program about your country. Now it's time to take you once again to our little red schoolhouse, where we meet professor and schoolmaster, NBC's Ben Grauer.
>
> HOST: This classroom session of Americana is devoted to questions which you, the members of our television audience have sent in. Questions about our great country, its history, its people, its tradition.

The use of the appellative form or direct address in this instance serves to create an imagined national community of American television viewers (Anderson 1991), but it also serves to emphasize the interactive relationship between *Americana* and its home audience.

Stop the Music (1950), *Strike it Rich* (1953), and *Chance of a Lifetime* (1951) all use phone calls to increase the integration of the home audience. *Stop the Music* consists mainly of contestants guessing the titles of musical numbers played live during the show and it uses phone calls to home viewers to integrate them in the ongoing competition. It increases the suspense during the program by cutting to close-ups of a telephone while the band plays a musical number, expecting it to ring and thus to make a connection to the home audience. This use of a telephone on television thus is an attempt to visualize the explicit link between *Stop the Music* and its audience. However, it also serves to illustrate the larger, implicit assumptions which are made in this show about the relationship between quiz shows and television audiences. The connection between television and its audience which is implied here is direct and immediate, without any indication of an uneven power relationship that separates institution and audience.

Strike it Rich and *Chance of Lifetime* attempt to involve their audience in a more active role. *Chance of a Lifetime* integrates its commercial message and the home audience into the program in a particularly tight manner. The home audience is invited to write to the show and pick one of the letters B-E-N-D-I-X, which spell the sponsor's name, Bendix (an appliance manufacturer). The host then picks one of the postcards with the right letter and calls the audience member, asks a quiz question, and rewards a correct answer with a prize. During the phone call in one specific episode (Sept. 5, 1951) the host points at himself and says, "I'm John Reed King and you're Mrs. Benson," and then points at the camera. Through these elements of direct address, the relationship between audience and host is cast in a particularly close fashion and contributes to the tight relationship between program, sponsor, host, and audience.

Strike it Rich (1951-1958) achieved an integration of the home audience with different devices and on a different level. This program had particularly needy contestants appear on stage and compete for an amount of money which would help them out, while audience members were encouraged to donate money for the contestants over the phone.

> "Strike it Rich" was known as "The Quiz Show With a Heart" and the contestants who appeared on the show were people in need of money or down on their luck. ... If unable to answer the questions correctly, the contestant could turn to the "heart line" where viewers would call in and donate money or merchandise (Schwartz, Ryan, and Wostbrock 1995, p. 188).

In one episode of *Strike it Rich* a blind women's choir in need of new robes, a starving farmer without a ticket home, and war veteran who wants to start a flower business appear on stage either to win a sufficient cash prize or to receive donations. Donations are continuously called in and are announced by the host toward the end of the show. Another on-screen telephone, this time placed on a shelf below a huge picture of a heart is used to symbolize the close emotional relationship with the home audience, or, as it is put on the program, the "Heartline to America."

While the shows discussed in this article all display the interest of producers and sponsors in maintaining a close, interactive relationship between text and audience, they articulate relationships to authority and cultural hierarchy much less clearly. Even though shows such as *Americana* and *Quiz Kids* adopt a schoolroom setting in which a wide variety of students from elementary school through college are quizzed on largely hierarchical knowledge, the quiz show genre as a whole does not seem to adhere to these kinds of standard educational capital in this early phase of network television. For example, *Chance of a Lifetime* emphasizes physical games and everyday knowledge as does *Strike it Rich* and a variety of other shows. However, in the period between 1952 and 1955, some significant changes in the genre can be observed. Generally quiz shows in this period move away from actively integrating contributions of the home audience in the production of the program, for example through phone calls or the mailing-in of quiz questions. Some shows allow the home audience to participate by mailing in answers to a specific question for home viewers, for example on *The Price is Right*, where home viewers can mail in their guess for the correct value (without going over) of a showcase with merchandise, such as a variety of mink coats and accessories. Otherwise, the close text-audience relationship which was common on quiz shows in radio and early television is often replaced by an incorporation of the studio audience.

While quiz shows in the late forties and early fifties either did not have an audience present in the studio or did not present a studio audience on screen, shows such as *Break the Bank* (ABC prime time 1954-1956) or *Name That Tune* (CBS prime time 1953-1959) frequently use close-ups of individual audience members or long shots of the studio audience as a whole. Additionally, the contestants for some of the shows are also drafted from the studio audience, a strategy for which *The Price is Right* has also become famous in the last twentyfive years. The almost utopian element of integrating home audiences into a program which seemed central to many early quiz shows is replaced by a representation of common people from the studio audience. Thus, the integration of a visual representation of the audience in quiz shows in the mid-fifties seems to serve as a surrogate for the close text-audience relationship from the earlier history of the genre.

The evidence provided through the work of Herzog (1940), industry related publications, and textual analyses of radio and television quiz shows suggests that the genre was considered to occupy a special role in invoking a strong audience involvement with the programs. Allen (1992) describes television's direct appeals to viewers and the encouragement of interaction between audience and program as a "rhetorical mode" (1992, p. 116). He claims that the rhetorical mode of television entices us to "enter into a contractual relationship that simulates what we experience in face-to-face situations" (Allen 1992, p. 119). While I agree that the rhetorical mode of television involves the viewer in a close relationship with the program, I would argue that audience participation on quiz shows (as well as talk shows) is often a programmatic tool that the broadcast industry uses to explore and define text-audience relationships. The period in the history of quiz shows covered in this article is characterized precisely by a sense of experimentation and lack of stability of the shape of the audience and the form of the genre. The rhetorical mode of quiz shows thus seems to function as a method to stabilize the complex relationship between industry, genre, and audience.

Most of the early television quiz shows discussed so far were produced during the FCC's suspension of the station application process from September 1948 until April 1952 (often referred to by media historians as *the freeze*). Since the FCC refused to issue licenses for the construction of new television stations, the rapid expansion of television in American culture slowed considerably. During this period it became possible for the broadcast industry to consolidate both technical and economic elements of television and again to solidify the role of networks as the driving force in broadcasting.

> The introduction of television had been anything but smooth, and the four-year freeze had a great deal of political manoeuvering as the "pre-freeze" stations, including those owned by the radio (and now television) networks tried to maximize their positions and hold-off the competition. ... Television's expansion was much faster than radio's; radio had taken more than a decade to reach beyond 33% penetration of US households; television did it in only seven years (1946-1952) despite the freeze on expansion (Jowett 1994, p. 140).

By 1956 television had entered 64.5% of all American households, and the competition between networks over the limited resource of audiences rapidly increased. Consequently, the creation of attractive programming for a large audience became of central importance. The tendency of quiz shows to move away from a close connection between audience and text, which was often actively enacted during a live broadcast, and toward a visual representation of 'the audience' within a program seems to coincide with the changing economic needs of the individual networks. The integration of a studio audience into a live broadcast can be accomplished more easily than the integration of home audience members who are only accessible through the telephone. Also, it opens up the possibility of visualizing the involvement of the surrogate audience in the studio. The institutional control of text-audience interactions becomes more important than the exploration of new possibilities for interaction.

Thus, there is a strong relation between the establishment of a regular order of network television broadcasting and the establishment of a more rigid definition of audience-medium interaction. Ultimately, the networks did not seem interested in fostering public thinking about modes of interaction which fall outside of the control of networks and can't be contained within network programs. The creation of audience participation is thus closely connected to a very specific phase in the history of broadcasting during which the networks attempted to stabilized their operations on various levels. In an interesting historical parallel, new forms of interaction and participation have started to appear in connection to the emergence of cable television and narrowcasting. Similar to period covered in this article, the broadcast industry seems to respond to instability with renewed attempts to renegotiate the relationship between the audience and the medium and provide a close connection between text and audience.

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The Cadaverous Bad Boy As Dream-Shadow Trickster:

Why Freddy Krueger Won't Let Teens Rest In Peace

By Paulette D. Kilmer, Ph.D.

Communication Department
The University of Toledo
Toledo, Ohio

For The Qualitative Studies Division
1998 AEJMC Convention in Baltimore, Maryland

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By Paulette D. Kilmer, Ph.D.

Communication Department
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The slasher films in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series gained popularity about twenty years ago by featuring campy dialogue, a rogue anti-hero and a new dimension for terror: sleep. The villain, Freddy Krueger, quickly became a pop-cultural celebrity with his own TV show and line of merchandise. This paper examines that guru of gore in Jungian terms to place him in the ongoing process of myth making that defines humanity. The Freddy Krueger films embody parables about coming of age in a scary, technological world.

The Cadaverous Bad Boy As Dream-Shadow Trickster:

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> But we continue to ask: what have all our other cultural achievements led to? The fearful answer is there before our eyes: man has been delivered from no fear; a hideous nightmare lies upon the world.
>
> Carl Jung[1]

Inside the heads of very normal looking people, monsters lurk. These twisted creations of the inner mind dwell under the surface of rational thought always active but unnoted until they run amok in nightmares.[2] In fact, following unspoken orders from the subconscious, at birth humans begin their inevitable quest to reduce all their earthly experiences into a bipolar reality of good and evil, of yin and yang. The symbols of repressed terrors and rotten past experiences wash over the sleeping individual in waves generated within the collective unconscious. Carl Jung coined the phrase, collective unconscious, to account for the ocean of shared images and motifs that surface in folklore and dreams everywhere on the planet.[3]

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[1] Carl Jung, *Four Archetypes: Mother/Rebirth/Spirit/Trickster*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992) 131.

[2] Carl Jung, *The Portable Jung*, edited by Joseph Campbell (New York: Viking Portable Library of Penguin Press) 1976; especially see "Shadow" in Chapter 6, "Aion" 144-148.

[3] James F. Iaccino, *Psychological Reflections on Cinematic Terror* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994) 3-4.

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Wes Craven, the creator of the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, turned news items in the *Los Angeles Times* into a cinematic gold mine as well as a pop-cultural reprise of folklore motifs and Jungian archetypes. Once upon a time, a boy stayed awake as long as possible because his bad dreams terrified him. His parents heard him screaming one night. Before they could rouse him, the teenager went into convulsions and died. This true story of a youth literally scared to death by nightmares inspired Craven to imagine what demons within could kill a healthy boy whose only apparent sin was falling asleep.[4] The autopsies showed no heart failure, no overt cause of death. Craven concluded that the boy had died of fright. Sometimes in Craven's thrillers, dreams seem more real--certainly more threatening--than waking hours to the insomniacs on Elm Street whose sleeplessness reflects their inability to overcome their anxieties about the dark secrets of their parents.

James Iaccino, a scholar of Jungian archetypes in horror films, points out that the issue of dream versus nightmare, of the struggle between good and evil transpires at the deepest level of consciousness. He suggests that an individual's unconscious thoughts are like islands rising from the sea of the psychic substrate that fortifies human understanding.[5] In fact, Jung warns that only those brave enough to monitor the dark side (shadow) of their minds attain salvation. Freddy embodies the taboo thoughts, the dire anxieties and the vile obsessions of his young victims. He dwells in the murky recesses of their minds. "A man [or in the Craven films, a teenager] who is possessed by his [or her] shadow is always standing in his [or her] own light and falling into his [or her] own traps." [6] This paper examines the Jungian elements that connect the Elm Street thrillers to traditional lore, the paradox of the repulsive fascination that Craven's fiend (Freddy Krueger) emanates and Craven's fractured fairy tales as rites of passage.

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[4] Iaccino, *Psychological Reflections*, 173. Also see William Schoell and James Spencer, *The Nightmare Never Ends: The Official History of Freddy Krueger and the "Nightmare on Elm Street" Films* (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1992) 179.

[5] Iaccino, *Psychological Reflections*, 3-4.

[6] Jung, *Four Archetypes*, 57.

Cheap Splatter Flick or Traditional Celluloid Myth?

The series of horror movies called *Nightmare on Elm Street* recast traditional elements of folklore into cinematic reflections of the perpetual soul wars between the forces of right and the minions of wrong that, ultimately, shape human consciousness. Jung explains that the ethical principles people invoke to build harmonious, life-giving communities collide perpetually in the personal unconscious, that layer of images, perceptions and experiences each individual collects during life. In the *Nightmare on Elm Street* films, these usually hidden clashes of right and wrong surface in mortal combat with the devil's advocate, Freddy. Freddy exists as a dimension of the victims' subconscious. He is the embodiment of their fears, of their inability to cope with the adult world effectively enough to survive adolescence.

The movies resemble dream scapes where good and evil vie for souls. Jung notes that the tension between opposites stirs constantly within the psychic bedrock of humanity, the collective unconscious. Some cultural cliches serve emotional functions. For example, American individualism expressed in independent thought requires delineating self not merely from parents but also from peers. Freddy's inventive gruesome assassinations of most of the gang on Elm Street figuratively represents the painful separation from companions and childish ways teenagers experience when they grow up and go to college, enter the military or relocate to pursue career goals. To succeed as an adult entails willingly venturing away from one's safe, chosen adolescent herd to establish an identity of one's own as a contributing rather than receiving member of the community.

The few who break Freddy Krueger's stranglehold attain autonomy by recognizing their worst fears about the present and, thus, begin to envision a promising future. In the hightec world of the late twentieth century, these ancient passages from one phase of life to another transpire without comment. Nevertheless, just as in primitive societies where youths pass from childhood to adulthood after proving themselves in difficult initiation ceremonies, only the elect on Elm Street pass the Freddy test. The traditional motif of sacrifice--some dying so that others may live--although bent still permeates these slasher pictures. The virtuous win, but they cannot achieve a lasting triumph because the source of sin--Freddy Krueger--arises within their own souls. Jung and Campbell both found this theme of the duality of human nature present in mythology all over the earth.

Vera Dika suggests that stalker films comprise a cinematic gladiator ring in which the spectators revel in the gore, relishing the brutal sporting events that pit hopelessly uneven opponents in life and death matches. These *Games of Terror* resonate within the teenage viewers fulfilling psychic needs.[7] Audiences cheer both for Freddy and for the teenagers who challenge him. The *Elm Street* movies always follow a basic plot skeleton that enables viewers to anticipate the climax and the resolution. Dika outlined the essential actions that must transpire in the "stalker cycle".[8] Although Iaccino reduces Freddy Krueger to a weak copycat of Norman Bates in *Psycho*, fans take the dream stalker very seriously. After all, Freddy Krueger exists as a mythic entity teenagers believe into actuality--both on and off screen. Therein, the maestro of moonlight madness embodies some of the concepts Jung used in dream analysis.

Through dream analysis, Jung's patients healed themselves by recognizing the symbolic meaning of their visions. Jung points out that people repress ugly motives, schemes and deeds. However, to attain moral maturity, each individual must integrate these ignoble elements of self into consciousness or be doomed to repeat them and, thus, to stagnate spiritually. Sometimes, Jung cured physical ailments by helping individuals uncover regrets entombed in their subconscious. He describes two extremes that often plagued his patients: dire inferiority complexes and megalomania.

On Elm Street, these mental conditions become stock characters in horrible parables of growing up. Freddy--the self-proclaimed deliverer of darkness--snares the souls of those whose feelings of self-hatred and worthlessness leave them defenseless against the spiral of self-destruction that they devise for themselves. It's sort of a play on the devil made me do it. Only this time, it's Freddy who makes the teenagers do to themselves what they secretly feel they deserve to suffer.

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[7] Vera Dika, *Games of Terror: Halloween, Friday the 13th, and the Films of the Stalker Cycle* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Press) 1990, 123-139.

[8] Vera Dika, "The Stalker Film, 1978-1981" in Gregory A. Waller, *American Horrors: Essays on the Modern American Horror Film* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1987) 93-94.

Only the strong survive after meeting Freddy Krueger, who embodies the dreamers' worst midnight terrors. The teens on Elm Street die because they cannot face the darkness in their hearts. They are fragmented by doubt and alienated from their parents, who often pursue selfish goals at their children's expense. Craven's rebels without a cause turn inward to escape from the numbing celebration of nothingness as well as the crushing conformity in the real world. These losers cannot integrate their feelings with reality. Their dreams kill them because they lack the intuitive power to listen to the voice of the totality of human experience encapsulated in myths and conveyed across the ages through sleep.

Sleep restores balance by giving the conscious access to the subconscious. Jung explained that the center of the personality, the id, draws upon archetypes buried within the collective unconscious to attach meaning to experiences. Jung emphasizes three prototypes: the anima, the animus and the shadow. The anima contains all the feminine elements of the personality and the animus, the masculine attributes. Moreover, people function best when balance prevails between the anima and animus. The shadow contains the negative aspects of the personality. Humans must either acknowledge their dark side or else succumb to physical illness as well as mental distress.

Craven made Freddy Krueger the incarnation of each victim's shadow realm of the subconscious. Simultaneously, Freddy dredges up ancient motifs of what it means to be human and expresses the vilest bestial thoughts of his callow prey. This cadaverous bad boy embodies a late twentieth-century manifestation of the folklore character, the trickster who prevails by ironically outwitting opponents.[9] Tricksters have evolved with humanity in all corners of the globe. Often, they reside in Hell. Sometimes, over the eons, their role and guise changes from an amoral, stupid pranksters to a cunning jokers who teach lessons or leave presents of new produce, fire, etc. in their wake. [10] Jung explains that the trickster protagonist changes as the storytellers achieve civilized living. However, no matter how sophisticated society becomes, underneath the glitz lurks the archetype of doom, the trickster, who gives substance to elements within the shadow. When ignored, the shadow side of individual personalities can trigger psychic epidemics of mass hysteria, hatred and fear. Jung offers Nazi Germany and the radio broadcast of *War of the Worlds* as examples of psychic epidemics.[11] For Freddy, death is the biggest joke of all. He converts the teenagers' wishful thinking into the machinery of their execution. He literally enforces the adage, "be careful or you'll get what you ask for." Krueger reaches through the TV screen, grabs the girl who dreams of being a star and smashes her head into the set, announcing, "Here's your break into prime time." Freddy's absurd actions make the audience laugh, providing a safe harbor for vicariously dispelling pent up hostility.

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[9] David Adams Leeming, *The World of Myth: An Anthology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 163-172. James Iaccino refers to Freddy as a shadow trickster in *Psychological Reflections*, 173, and gives examples of his fiendish pranks on page 177.

Krueger belongs to the legion of tricksters around the globe who beguile audiences with antics that only a magical animal with human capabilities, including violence and deceit, can perform. For example, in the Pacific realm, "Maui" scoops the islands of Oceania out of the sea. In Japan, "Kitsune" shifts shape to make farmers pay taxes on their rice crops. In Africa, "Anansi", the droll spider, steals the sun from the sky god. In the United States, "Blue Jay", "Raven", "Whiskey Jack", "Brer Rabbit" and "Old Man" all perform traditional trickster roles. The legends leave the listener smiling because, for tricksters, humor serves as a calling card. Yet, underneath the chuckles run threads of meanness, hints of perversity.

In American cinema, Freddy Krueger embodies the worst personality traits of the folklore pranksters and, thus, emerges as a dream-shadow trickster. His power to invade the minds of fans and foes alike arises from the flood of images that inundate society in many forms including advertising, the Internet and conversation. Freddy thrived on the angst of the late 1980s that made horror an awful delight. In *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the*

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[10] Jung, *Four Archetypes*, 144-147.

[11] Jung, *Four Archetypes*, 61.

Heart, Noel Carroll concludes that this lord of loathsomeness marched in "the parade of disillusionments that followed in [the trail of the Vietnam War]", turning the American Dream into a nightmare.[12] Dika agrees that slasher films appealed to teenagers circa 1978 more than at other times because the Iran Hostage Crisis and other disappointing events had left Americans of all ages disillusioned and uncertain. In fact, she concludes that stalker films embody modern myths because they help viewers interpret threatening contemporary social conflicts.[13] Jung warns that those who blame fate for their own ineptitude and act without assessing their own unclean motives turn politics into the arena for both tragedy and savagery. "[They] never suspect their own hidden and apparently harmless shadow has qualities whose dangerousness exceeds [their] wildest dreams. As soon as people get together in masses and submerge the individual, the shadow is mobilized, and, as history shows, may even be personified and incarnated."[14]

A Bogeyman For All Seasons

Freddy Krueger's induction into the pantheon of American bogeymen outlived the box-office run of the movies. The *Nightmare on Elm Street* films drew crowds of mostly twelve to seventeen year olds. They laughed and shouted approval when Freddy ingeniously reduced fresh-faced cheerleaders and scruffy recovering drug addicts alike to piles of raw meat. Freddy Krueger, the trickster from Hell, disarms people with his gothic sense of humor. Feeding on souls, this psychic vampire exhibits all the charms of zombies but none of the rigid brainlessness traditionally ascribed to the walking dead. Moreover, as Craven cranked out the sequels, Freddy's fame increased. Even folks who never would watch a stalker movie still met Freddy Krueger.

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[12] Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Rutledge, 1990) 214.

[13] Dika, "The Stalker Film," 99.

[14] Jung, *Four Archetypes*, 147.

In fact, the smirking bogeyman's name was recognized so widely in the early 1990s that when a student in one of my classes called his grades "Freddy Krueger in an envelope", everyone laughed. Although over a third of the class had never seen any of the films, still they enjoyed the joke. Freddy--that zombie with a complexion like a squash, razor talons, a big smile and no heart--lives in the recesses of people's minds, possibly, because of the blitz of advertising that promotes movies. People bought over a half a million videocassettes of the first trio of New Line Cinema's four films chronicling Freddy's grisly adventures. Within two years of his silver-screen debut, Freddy dolls, game boards, sweaters and other merchandise had grossed over $15 million. In 1988, 160 stations ran *Freddy's Nightmares*, a TV program spun off the horror movies.[15]

This Freddy mania has triggered a tidal wave of conversation and images. It became nearly impossible to shut out, at least, name recognition of the celluloid king of bad dreams. People absorb popular culture via the grapevine as unintentionally as they inhale secondhand smoke or encounter rainbows. Many pick up extraneous images as they surf the Internet. When I recently typed "Freddy Krueger" onto www.metacrawler.com, I pulled up thirty-three different hits, including Jay's tribute to the "one-man sleep disorder with a bad attitude." I also found twenty hits with a few repeated addresses via metacrawler under "Freddy Kreuger." I tried the variant to see if the teenagers were paying attention to the spelling of the guru of gore's name. Some were not. It seems that the real spelling of Freddy's name is EVIL. His mythic qualities as a shadow trickster and the moral in his formula thrillers that even losers can overcome their innermost terrors rather than clerical details stick with many young viewers. The variety of references to "Freddy Kreuger" [sic] surprised me.

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[15] Richard Corliss, "Did You Ever See A Dream Stalking? Freddy Is the Nightmare Moviegoers Love to Hate," *Time* (5 Sept. 1988) 66.

One web page purports to be posted by Freddy Kreuger [sic]. On it, Maggie DN replied to Gigi's newest pic posted on MDN in November, "What happen [sic] to her hair? Is she dressed for halloween [sic]? This is too scary for me. I'm having nightmares lately!!!! Help!!!" Those who wished could e-mail a response. Another stop on the super-information highway offered the chance to enter the "Freddy Vs. Jason" contest. Of course, the rules are the same as in the *Scream 3* contest. Write a story or plot of what should happen in the ghoul duel. The winner will be posted in about a month.

Those seeking short biographies of the central characters in the flicks can click on to a web site named *Nightmare on Elm Street*. The author of this page points out that: "In 1984, Wes Craven introduced a new face to scare America. Fred Kreuger [sic]. Freddy represents everyone's fears. Unlike Jason, who typically only kills stupid people or horny teenagers, Freddy discriminates against none. He has only requirement. You have to be asleep. Click on the following links to learn about that character (and view pics) from a *Nightmare on Elm Street*."

Under an invitation to click for the "joke of the day," a web-page author proposed making Freddy Krueger's house a museum for horror movies. There were pictures from *The Craft*, *Scream: Now Everyone Is a Victim and Everyone is a Suspect*, *Seven* and, of course, Wes Craven's *New Nightmare on Elm Street*. Visitors can download sounds from the Nightmare movies: "Nancy's description of Fred Krueger" "Do you know who he is mother?" "Alternate sound bit not in original release," "Heather/Nancy confusion in New Nightmare" and "Every kid knows who Freddy is..." The page ends with an invitation to sign the guest book and to click onto some other strange cites, including "Mrs. Munger's Class," "Jenga's Library" and "Spasm".

On The Dream Page (Interpretations), the following "Dream Being Interpreted" appears: "I have this frightening reoccurring dream. I am in my old hometown in Lindsay, Oklahoma. Basically, Freddy Krueger is in the dreams. He kills all of the people around me and they come back to life as demons. The demons as well as Freddy are trying to kill me. In my mind I know that once he gets me, everything will go back to normal. But all I do is run scared until the end of the dream. The dream always ends the same way, too. I am the last one left, everyone has been killed. I run out of my house, around the side of my house where my demonic dog finally gets me. Then everything goes back to normal."

Below the text of the dream, "The Interpretations" follow: "Some dreams are not meant to be interpreted, there are various accounts of Kreuger [sic] dreams now and especially when the movie first came out. Dreams are a big part of our life and this movie captures the real life and the dream sequence vividly enough to mass produce delusions of Freddy."

In a review of the movie, *The Designated Mourner*, "Clare" mentions Freddy as a benchmark for what might be scary. Jeff Smith compares a politician to Freddy Krueger: "...Ed Moore, Pima County's equivalent to Freddy Kreuger [sic]." *The International Journal of Drug Testing* Instructions for References uses this title in its example for citing movies, "Friday the Thirteenth, part 34: Freddy Kreuger [sic] meets Jason."

The "stud for hire" richcoe listed Freddy Kreuger [sic] along with Kermit the Frog, Plato and Michael Myers as his heroes. Jonsson praised Alice, a girl who beats Freddy, at least momentarily, as one of "The Greatest Heros [sic] and heroines of horror movie history." Three parodies of wrestling mania announced matches between Kid Kreuger [sic] and a menagerie of contenders. Finally, the conservative organization, *Campus Leader: A Newsletter for Student Leaders from Young America's Foundation*, invoked horrible imagery to denounce the "attempt to politicize national history standard": "Just like Jason from 'Friday the 13th' or 'A Nightmare on Elm Street's' Freddy Kreuger [sic], the National Standards for History is a monstrosity that refuses to die."

Even on the web, when Freddy Krueger materializes, he wears the trademark filthy hat, nerdy striped sweater and razor-tipped glove. He must always look the same because his appearance has become an icon for evil. He is a stock character of the modern cinema, the poster boy for sadistic homicide. Ironically, his power over his victims arises from their inability to stop thinking about him. His popularity has created a demand for this summer's slasher showdown--sort of an "OKay Corral" of horror films--between two of the most infamous and, therein, beloved hunks of decaying flesh ever to flicker on the silver screen--Jason and Fred Krueger!

Freddy Krueger: Nobody Ever Lives Happily Ever After

Why do slasher films appeal to teenagers, particularly? How does imagery from these tasteless descents into brutality seep into the minds of individuals who never watch them? Perhaps, cinema's fiend next door, Freddy Krueger, evokes the enormous almost hypnotic power of the repulsive over people. *In Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self*, Leslie Fiedler points out that humans create the monsters they need to believe in when nature fails to supply these prototypes.[16] Ultimately, humans regard these abnormal outsiders as dark reflections of themselves. The anti-social corner of our soul collects images of forbidden things that we fear: warding off murderous strangers, being lost in spooky terrains, being mutilated, catching a loathsome disease, watching those we love die, falling into bottomless debt.

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[16] Leslie Fiedler, *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 27.

Our ancient ancestors exorcised such fears through tales of the hero/ine's journey. As Keith Cunningham (a movie critic who studies the relationship between motion pictures and mythology) points out, these stories remind listeners that life itself is nothing more than a process of change. "We die and are reborn out of ourselves: the image of the snake biting his tail."[17] In other words, through plots, we vicariously live and die. We experiment with solutions to problems; we learn the meaning of suffering so that when our turn on the cross comes, we are emotionally prepared to endure the pain. The moral to every story is that through crisis, we grow, and without it, we die.[18]

The Freddy Krueger films reflect the tradition of telling stories about attaining self-awareness, inner peace and life itself only after completing a hard, scary journey. This voyage requires the traveler to explore the depths of destructive feelings, like dread and hopelessness, that enslave many individuals in a mental prison of frustration and failure. Indeed, the actor who played Freddy in the films and on the TV series, *Freddy's Nightmares*, told a reporter from *Rolling Stone* magazine that Freddy's appeal arises from his ability to empower youths to purge their demons of apathy and cynicism. "...[The] horror is buried inside, that dense, dark web of troubled history and garbled fears and desires that help make up our internal lives."[19]

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[17] Keith Cunningham, "Myths, Dreams and Movies: Exploring the Archetypal Roots of Cinema", *The Quest* (Spring 1992) 35.

[18] Cunningham, *Myths*, 25.

[19] Mikal Gilmore, "How the Villain of Nightmare on Elm Street Became a Hero for Our Time," *Rolling Stone (6 Oct. 1988)*, 92.

The skinny, vengeance-obsessed, cool ghoul speaks from deep within the fertile ground of that timeless internal pool of stories--the collective unconscious--inside every person's head where the grotesque and the gorgeous lie side by side. In fairy tales, monsters, like ogres and wicked witches, represent the dark half of human psyche where the impulses to reveal in violence wait for the breakdown of civilization. We clench our animal thirst for blood in socially acceptable impersonal confrontations like sporting events, exercise regimes or vicarious sprees of mayhem provided by the evening news and other forms of entertainment. We risk becoming so charmed by the mass media that we lose contact with our inner selves and, thus, turn into sound-bite zombies. Jung refers to a loss of soul reported in primitive societies and, occasionally, manifested on the psychiatrist's couch wherein the body remains like a vacant house, present but lifeless. The general malaise can only be overcome through reconnecting the mind and the will.[20]

Of course, Freddy offers us the chance to purge our hatred and other odious dispositions vicariously through suspending our belief long enough to live the story of how the weak and helpless at last prevail over relentless cruelty. The young protagonists can't kill Freddy. He will come back. He will always wait for us to fail to love one another enough. He'll loom in the shadows. He is the universal shriek of terror at the midnight realization of lost faith, broken dreams, alienated souls. Freddy's ugliness reflects the evil in him, in us, in our society. Like Jung, many ask, "Can we not understand that all the outward tinkerings and improvements do not touch man's inner nature, and that everything ultimately depends upon whether the man who wields the science and the technics is capable of responsibility or not?"[21]

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[20] Jung, *Four Archetypes,* 53-54.

[21] Jung, *Four Archetypes,* 132.

In fairy tales, the villains are twisted physically by their viciousness. In Freddy films, this traditional motif of the hideous takes on a twentieth-century look. The fingers of the monster's right hand end in curved razors rather than talons! He's an industrial bogeyman, striking through nightmares partly because we've become too sophisticated to pay attention to our spirits. Just as hunger and poverty made ancients vulnerable, the machine-ruled modern world has proclaimed the death of God and, therein, consigned the most literate generation of all time to spiritual isolation and inner desolation. The messages in Freddy's films begin in the opening scenes and continue to the end of the motion picture.

For example, *Nightmare on Elm Street III* begins with words from the master of horror, Edgar Allan Poe, "Sleep, those little slices of death. How I loath them." Of course, in this world where cheerleaders eat instant-coffee flakes to stay awake and moms can't take the time to listen to their children's bedtime terrors, sleep literally constitutes little slices of death. In stalker films, the authority figures: police, doctors, parents, teachers who normally protect the young are powerless.[22] In Craven's thrillers, many grown-ups lack emotional maturity. Adolescents slip into the abyss because the parents on Elm Street do not love their children near as dearly as they adore sexual liaisons and the approval of strangers. In one girl's dream, even when her mother's head is severed from her body, the selfish mom whines, "When I bring home a man, you spoil everything. All you want is attention."

Such lines have earned Wes Craven, the creator of the dream stalker, praise from *Time* magazine: "With sharp humor, a dash of B-movie style and the eerie simplicity of a child's counting rhyme, they tap profound adolescent fears, then exorcise them."[23] The stand-up comedy lines Krueger fires off prior to dispatching his victims reflect his reincarnation of the folklore character, the trickster. As Jung and Campbell both pointed out, the private heroic journey all humans must complete demands taking risks to successfully integrate positive and negative personality traits.[24] With each metaphoric descent into Hell and rebirth into meaningful existence that transpires when we confront our worst fears, we gain the spiritual insight that will give us the courage to persevere. Perpetual change erodes our dreams each day so that new possibilities might emerge for us. We are enticed, challenged, scared and purified by the constant changes that we endure.

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[22] Dika, *The Stalker Film*, 91.

Besides the literal interpretation of the movies as plots about a community of teenagers, one might analyze them as a morality play about the many masks each person wears even as a child. Perhaps, the circle of friends exists only in the dreamer's mind. Perhaps, the entire motion picture is an extended nightmare in which one lone sleeper suffers fragmentation and death of the destructive but, nevertheless, comforting images of self until only the strongest remains. Perhaps, the trip to Freddy's house psychologically involves stripping away the illusions that shackle one in past failures. Then, the silly assassinations of the comrades represent the inevitable surrender of childish ways to accept adult responsibilities. Freddy relentlessly teaches youth that survival demands self-confidence, self-reliance, self-awareness.

Teenagers must distance themselves from their families to establish their own adult identity. Of course, part of the purging process involves reconciling tensions between self and others, particularly for teenagers, between themselves and their parents. In the Freddy films, this rite of passage often costs them their lives because the parents are too caught up in the material world to minister to their children's psychic needs.

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[23] Corliss, "Did You Ever See a Dream Stalking?", 67.

[24] Cunningham, "Myth", 35.

Indeed, one mother tells the psychiatrist at the institution, where Freddy's victims seek sanctuary, that her daughter's nightmares seemed to get worse when she took away the girl's credit cards. The jaded parent can only respond with sarcasm to the concerned psychiatrist's questions. Vicariously, young viewers blame all their problems on the insensitive adults who brought them into the world, but, then, when the novelty wore off, abandoned them. This clash between parents and children crackles throughout Freddy's rampage. Only peers and the very young grown-ups, who also have visited Freddy's house, can help them.

"The adult wants to slash down the next generation," Craven explained to *Time*. "No keys to the car, Son. And no clean beaches, no safe streets, no safe sex, no noble politicians. Just a zillion-dollar debt for you to pay, and a nuclear winter that lasts forever. Adults ruined the world and created Freddy. Only kids can save it and destroy him."[25]

In fact, Freddy is the incarnation of lust, depravity and meanness. He embodies evil because careless guards failed to protect his mother--who was an innocent young girl--from maniacs in a criminal asylum. She spent a holiday locked in with the most violent and vile of the criminally insane. They raped her hundreds of times, and, thus, she conceived the demon child. This mother returns from her grave to rescue her son's lost soul by convincing the sheriff to bury his molding bones properly so that Freddy's spirit can rest. But, the ghoul doesn't willing enter that gentle night of eternal sleep. He's collecting tender souls, dreaming of that sweet time when nobody on earth will rest in peace because they will all be lodgers in his house of horrors!

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[25] Corliss, "Did You Ever See A Dream Stalking?", 67.

Freddy's protean home becomes whatever will traumatize the dreamer. The stalkers in less sophisticated slasher films strike from the outside and can be killed readily by ordinary means.[26] However, Freddy works from the inside out and, thereby, eludes detection and destruction. His victims, inadvertently, consent to his vile presence in their thoughts and lack the spiritual power to deny him access to their souls.

Instant coffee, a miracle of efficiency, and Coca-Cola can't keep the blond teen awake in movie three: *Dream Warriors*. She's defenseless against Freddy, who lurks in the caverns of her mind, waiting to strike. Modern technological triumphs can't protect this perpetual loser from the oldest danger of all, her own late-night terrors. She dreams the tap on the faucet becomes Freddy's claws, and, to make it so, slashes herself with razor blades. Freddy compels the kids on Elm Street to commit suicide. But, Freddy, himself, exists only because they allow his raids on their sanity. Once, a psychiatrist and the blonde momentarily defeat their nasty nemesis.

Unfortunately, inevitably, Freddy comes back. Why? The Elm Street gang must pay for the sins of their parents. This motif is as old as the planet. Many stories in folklore and literature retell the suffering children endure because of the transgressions of their fathers and mothers. Freddy's hobby while a teenager was killing children as enthusiastically as some bag fish. He laughed, when due to a technicality, the courts set him free--free to once more slay little children just to watch them die. He was a living abomination. The adults, on that tree-lined lane where Freddy committed his murderous romp, decided to avenge their dead children and burned the fiend alive. Freddy's spirit roams the earth because the sheriff dumped his bones in the trunk of a battered, rusting Cadillac in the junkyard. No, Freddy can't, won't rest.

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[26] Gilmore, "How the Villain of "Nightmare on Elm Street" Became a Hero For Our Times," 92.

In a world torn by enmity where irrationality and bigotry rather than love and justice often motivate folks, Craven thinks his movies offer a timely warning--when the good look the other way, wickedness flourishes. Moreover, those who do ignore evil, eventually, die. "There are a million ways that we in our culture sleep and try to check out of what's really going on," Craven said.[27] Drugs, sex, shopping binges, booze, violence, racism and denial all offer momentary escape. But, eventually, the ugliness drowns even the most hard-core bystander. Craven hoped that his Freddy parables would remind teenagers, indeed all of us, that only those who confront their inner fears, who take responsibility for their actions and who draw upon their reservoirs of inner strength will survive. After all, the traditional method of defeating the devil is, simply, telling him to go away. In many vampire tales, the seduced meal ticket must invite the bloodsucker into the room. Thus, weak-willed victims become co-conspirators in their own damnation.

Freddy Krueger exists only because he fills a horrible void in the minds of his prey. Jung contrasts the healing power of membership in a group with the stark reality that strangers united by terror, repulsion or narrow tribalism form a mob. They experience collective transformation and gain a new identity simply from being one of the pack. As a crowd, they commit acts unthinkable to individuals because they feel no responsibility, no fear; they revel in animal ardor and the age-old drive to subjugate.

The sequence of Freddy films, unintentionally, bears witness to the fact that nobody ever lives happily ever after. While fairy tales make this promise to strengthen our faith in the healing power of goodness, we soon realize that our lives take us to the peaks of happiness and the valleys of despair. Our social myths, often conveyed through pop culture, give us insights into understanding how suffering transforms us into compassionate humans who rise above the temptation to exploit others.

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[27] Gilmore, "How the Villain of 'Nightmare on Elm Street' Became a Hero for Our Times," 94.

Conclusions:

In the end, Freddy Krueger's reign of mayhem always yields to the powers of goodness, usually, represented by a pure young woman. Suppressing Freddy symbolizes the young woman's mental battle against her own internal ugliness. To endure, she must control her shadow side and balance her anima (female) and animus (male) personality components. The young woman defeats her innermost bogeyman by combining her feminine instincts of compassion and cooperation with her male psychic elements of aggression and self-reliance.

Although Freddy never rests in peace, he must wait for the opportunity to invade consciousness. He is a bipolar construct; the opposite of goodness. Of course, many motion pictures celebrate the lives of the virtuous. If we turn on the TV or go to the movies, we will find comforting friends whose stories give us laughter and insight into what it means to be happy, to be successful, to be a member of a community. We will learn from these nonexistent figments of the imagination that joy and sorrow befall us all, making us one human family regardless of where we live, what god we pray to, what color we are or how we happen to make a living.

Twentieth century mass media provide a constant stream of narratives about the human quest for two often mutually exclusive states--spiritual and material wellbeing. To understand the pull of opposites within the soul, Jung analyzed archetypes. Freddy Krueger embodies Jung's archetype of the shadow, the subconscious strata of dark ruminations within each human heart. He also resembles Jung's ever-present trickster, who confounds the complacent. In general, all movies resurrect timeless psychic elements that Jung described. By vicariously enduring life's tragedies, celebrating promises kept and triumphing over evil, moviegoers join innumerable generations before them who also sought healing from storytellers. Through reliving the tale each time it's told, people attain wholeness despite the forces of fragmentation--intolerance, suspicion, alienation and malice--that permeate society.

Reframing a house of mirrors:
Communication and empowerment
in a community leadership program

by

Eleanor M. Novek, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Communication
Monmouth University
West Long Branch, NJ 07764

732-571-4427
732-988-0998

Email: enovek@mondec.monmouth.edu

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ABSTRACT:

Reframing a house of mirrors:
Communication and empowerment in a community leadership program

Scholars assert that communities strengthen themselves by bringing residents together and mobilizing them to solve local problems. How does this happen? What communication practices enable individuals to act together for the common good? This paper explores the development and implementation of a community leadership program in the northeastern United States from a communication perspective, in order to help grassroots practitioners maximize the application of meaning production and discursive reframing as communication strategies for empowerment.

I. Introduction

In urban areas across the United States, communities struggle to cope with the effects of unemployment, crime, domestic violence, infant mortality, and drug and alcohol abuse. Yet some scholars assert that a community can be a focus of civic empowerment even in the midst of its problems; here, they say, bonds can form between groups with common goals, and cooperation can support real social change (J. Servaes, 1990). In keeping with this belief, residents of some localities are making new efforts to come together and mobilize to improve local living conditions. These communities share the vision of a "civil society," where people of all classes and ethnicities are committed to the common good; most use communication strategically to help their members recognize the value of collective effort in coping with the shared concerns of everyday life.

Last year, I took part in a grassroots empowerment effort of this type in a coastal community in the northeastern United States. The area was long known for its seaside charms; but for a number of reasons the crowds had stopped coming and the city streets grew deserted. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, economic decline reduced the city's ability to provide services, including recreation for youth. Some residents blamed this situation for the city's high rates of violence, substance abuse, school dropout, youth incarceration, and AIDS cases. In the autumn of 1996, a small group of community service and philanthropic organizations began working to improve the quality of life in the city. The group had two aims: a short-term goal of creating activity programs for youth and a long-term goal of empowering new leadership committed to the city's revival.

This paper traces the development of that group in its first year of existence, asking: What communication practices do people use when they want to come together to act for the common good? In presenting a case study which identifies the discursive practices of a group of people working to build community, I hope to contribute to a greater understanding of the role of communication in civic empowerment, and to help future grassroots organizers improve their communication strategies.

II. Communication and community: How do people work together?

For some time scholars have discussed the tensions between the pursuit of self-interest and the requirements of the common good. Terms like "community," "civic virtue," "communitarianism," "democratic participation," and "social capital" have gained new prevalence in popular discourse, chiefly in normative discussions about lost common values that should be rediscovered. These phrases are often used as if they are universally understood, but it may be useful to begin a discussion of community empowerment by defining contemporary meanings of the terms "community" and "empowerment."

Paulo Freire observes (1973) that community is "a social relationship with other individuals and with the world" (p. 3). Historically, when most social relationships were dependent on geographic proximity, communities were largely physical organizations, recognizable by fairly rigid social systems structured by and around a local elite, with local institutionalized patterns for controlling social change (M. Janowitz, 1967). Social connectedness was a factor in early discussions of community, but territorial organization and physical location were equally important descriptors (R. Park, 1983). Although many early 20th-century sociologists recognized multiple meanings of the term, Larry Lyon (1987) notes, they generally agreed that community meant "people living within a specific area, sharing common ties, and interacting with one another" (p. 5). In the noted work, *Habits of the Heart,* Bellah et al. (1996) observed that the members of such communities come together to deal with threats and take advantage of opportunities because of a "sense of connectedness, shared fate, mutual responsibility" (p. xxx).

Theorists of the late 20th century have heralded a new type of social network in the proliferation of affinity groups based on electronically shared "experiences" (J. Meyrowitz, 1985; H. Rheingold, 1993; Parks & Floyd, 1996; and S. Turkle, 1996). Communication technologies have led to the creation of "virtual communities," defined as groups of people separated in physical space but linked by common interests and electronic media. The members of these networks are seen to be "bound by a sense of identity, shared values and interaction" (G. Payne, 1993, p. 7) and linked by "a common interest or shared circumstance" (M. Smith 1995, p. 11), rather than by physical space. It may be too soon to say whether such ties can stimulate the collective action necessary to improve "real world" quality of life, but some scholars do not think so. Peter Simonson (1996) disputes the belief that innovations in communication will inspire social unity. Such notions, he argues, are "a magic" that ignores the ongoing habits of human behavior (p. 333). Notions of virtual community carry the implied promise that social problems will disappear once people recognize their common interests, Lyon notes, but without proximity and shared experience, "the idea that voluntary organizations can replace the territorial community as the primary basis for the psychological feelings of community is questionable" (1987, p. 111). These concerns are echoed by Robert Putnam (1996), who has charted a national decline in civic participation over the last 30 years. As more citizens identify themselves by special interests rather than local ones, he argues, the essential action-based varieties of civic engagement, such as volunteerism and political participation, are foundering.

Yet some groups do come together to take collective social and political action, and a number of contemporary scholars have sought to explain how this occurs. The bonds of community are seen to evolve in groups of people who recognize common problems and seek a joint remedy for these conditions (J. Fox, 1985; Gaventa & Lewis, 1991; Hawkins, Catalano & Wells, 1986; W. Luttrell, 1988; Spector & Kitsuse, 1987). Feminist scholars have observed the growth of community when individuals cooperate with one another in a fundamental attitude of protectiveness or caring (C. Gilligan, 1982; b. hooks, 1989; S. Ruddick, 1989; J. Tronto, 1989; J. Wood, 1994; and others). Amitai Etzioni (1993) claims that relational bonds are strongest in groups where members focus primarily on helping others, "and allow social networks to evolve as a by-product" (p. 125).

Discussions of community-building often refer to transformative change, variously called "self-actualization" or "empowerment," and theorists have attempted to define the concept while observing the phenomenon. Anthony Giddens (1984) emphasizes the individual's recognition that she has the capacity to "make a difference" or to "intervene in the world" in her own behalf. Ozer & Bandura (1990) see transformative change taking place when people achieve "the requisite knowledge, skills and resilient self-beliefs of efficacy to alter aspects of their lives over which they can exercise some control" (p. 472). Zimmerman & Rappapport (1988) define empowerment as a combination of "self-acceptance and self-confidence, social and political understanding, and the ability to play an assertive role in controlling resources and decisions in one's community" (p. 726).

Group dynamics are also seen to play a significant role in empowerment. Lakin & Costanzo (1979) observe that groups evolve a "rejuvenative and recreational emotionalism" (p. 176) which makes collective action possible. Bachrach & Botwinick (1992) note that joint effort fosters self-development while promoting communal values: "When one takes one's destiny into one's own hands through participatory involvement with others, both the power of the individual and of the group are often increased, which leads to a sense of solidarity and individual well-being" (pp. 29-30). Gerri Johnson (1991) observes three steps in self-determination: people first build faith in their own capability, then learn to share resources, and then participate in group decision-making.

Scholars note that communication practices are pivotal in building social bonds and enabling collective action. Giddens (1984) sees the formation of social systems as grounded in communication. People form connections because they recognize the same values, norms and authorities, and these connections are acted out on a larger scale by social institutions. Jurgen Habermas (1984) coined the term "communicative action" to describe the cooperation of people who share interpretations of situations and events. With common vision, he says, the members of a group no longer act exclusively according to individual self-interest, but coordinate their actions for mutual benefit. Oscar Gandy (1989) describes such interdependence as a "community of interest," while Etzioni (1993) calls it "getting back to we." Whatever the nomenclature, cooperative groups often rely on strategic communication practices to help them reach their goals.

An example of this can be found in the work of Davis & Jasinski (1993), who extend Giddens' view of meaning production in their study of smaller groups. The researchers identify four modes of communication used to generate shared meaning in groups and to steer members toward common objectives: *visualization* to share visions that identify and prioritize group values and goals; *signification* to define public actors and shape public perception of events; *allocation* to distribute and manage their material resources; and *legitimation* to establish patterns of authority. Davis & Jasinksi (1993) say that creating and sharing meaning is especially important to groups seeking to forge new identities and empower their members to engage in meaningful action (p. 145).

Another strategic form of communication occurs when people use language to group phenomena or people with common characteristics (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch,1974). Like a frame around a painting, these categories shape understanding (G. Bateson, 1972) by emphasizing some aspects of reality while obscuring others. This limited form of sense-making has been compared to a "view through a window" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 1). Typically, Robert Entman (1993) asserts, framing defines reality "in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation (or) moral evaluation" (p. 52) of people and situations. At its worst, Erving Goffman (1974) notes, framing leads to "frame traps," where meanings can be arranged whether by intent or default, "so that incorrect views, however induced, are confirmed by each bit of new evidence or each effort to correct matters, so that, indeed, the individual finds that he is trapped and nothing can get through" (Goffman, 1974, p. 480).This form of limited understanding takes place among individuals in daily interaction, in discourse, and, of course in the mass media.

Such representations are not fixed, however, but may be sites of struggle or negotiation (S. Hall, 1991); a group may try to transform a commonly held meaning which has negative implications for its members "by changing or re-articulating its associations"

(Hall, 1991, p. 110). Goffman (1959) notes that groups use *reframing* to revise their own ideas of themselves or to recreate their identities in the eyes of beholders: "Instead of allowing an impression of their activity to arise as an incidental by-product of their activity, (groups) can re-orient their frame of reference and devote their efforts to the creation of desired impressions" (p. 250). People who have seen themselves as powerless or who have been judged by others as inferior have recreated their images into likenesses of efficacy or capability. Again, they have done this in personal interaction, in discourse, and through strategic engagement with the mass media.

The leadership group studied here relied heavily on the communication practices of *meaning production* and *reframing* to empower local residents. Its members were urged to *visualize* the goals of a renewed city and safe, healthy youth. They were called on to *signify* their new status by participating in public events. They were taught to *allocate* resources, such as grant monies and volunteer labor, for youth projects. And they were invited to *legitimate* their public identities by cooperating in ongoing civic efforts. The group also employed *reframing*, especially in ceremonial rituals and ongoing promotional efforts to celebrate its members and draw attention to them. Through *reframing*, the members of the leadership corps no longer defined themselves as struggling anonymous citizens of an economically troubled city, but as a team of activists, trained, capable and involved in making social change for the common good. As this new vision emerged, the participants carried it to the local mass media as well as to their own neighborhoods.

When a grassroots organization uses forms of communication as empowerment strategies, should success be measured by members' perceptions, by changes in the distribution of local power, or by something else? Bachrach & Botwinick (1992) note that participatory experiences in groups may transform people, but ask whether participants will "gain from their experience a capacity for a more inclusive common life beyond the interests and concerns of their particular group" (p. 133). Simonson (1996) observes that "overcoming poverty and class animosity requires more than . . . communication" (p.

332). While longitudinal studies and institutional analyses may be necessary to determine a any group's relationship to local structures of power over time, an analysis of the communication practices of one such group may help to illuminate these issues for our future exploration.

III. The method of the research

Attempting to conduct research and perform the work of social change at the same time offers challenges. Subjective knowledge gathered by involved participants may be unique, personal, and context-specific. Activist studies may not be easily accreted as data, or generalizable across a variety of conditions. Various participants and audiences may not share common languages or conceptual perspectives; indeed, defining terms with contested meanings may be difficult. Additionally, some of the experiential insights offered by such work may not be measurable in the traditional languages and methods of social science.

Rather than turning aside from such paradoxes, however, activist scholars constantly embrace new methods for gathering, analyzing, and understanding their data. Because emancipatory research seeks to illuminate the generally hidden social processes of daily life and its inherent possibilities for social transformation (P. Lather 1991), activist scholars are explicit about the contradictions their work uncovers. They do not hesitate to be critical of the relationships between researchers and the groups of people with whom they study (Lather 1991, J. Acker, K. Barry & J. Esseveld 1991). They are open to exploring the disparities between liberatory theory and the physical conditions of its praxis (M. Mies 1991, M.M. Fonow & J.A. Cook 1991). Additionally, Lather (1991) notes, it is important for practitioners of emancipatory research not only to welcome new theories and methods, but also to open these attempts and their results to examination by other participants in the dialogue of inquiry.

This study combines the methods of participant observation, open-ended interviews, and collaborative dialogue about the research findings. The latter technique is adapted from participatory action research, in which researchers and members of a community work together to analyze and change a social environment (J. Servaes 1990, W.F. Whyte 1991). Some feminist scholars also engage in collaborative dialogue with the people they study, finding that this approach privileges the experiences and perspectives of all participants, not just those of the researcher (M. Belenky et al. 1986, p. 146).

As a situated scholar personally and politically oriented to democratic grassroots participation, I wanted not only to study this initiative, but to help it succeed. When I joined the leadership group, the members agreed that I was welcome to observe, take part in, and collect notes about the group's activities and training sessions, its kickoff, orientation and graduation ceremonies. Although I explained repeatedly that my research was analytical and would focus on the group's communication practices, most members seemed to envision this work as a way of creating a written celebration of their group history.

I gathered observational data between October 1996 and May 1997. After the training ended in May, I conducted individual open-ended interviews with the participants, the program coordinator, heads of nonprofit groups involved in developing and funding the program, and people who participated as trainers. Though some said they would not mind identification, participants spoke with the understanding that their names would not be used and their city would not identified in the final report. The interview sessions ended in October 1997, when a second "class" of participants was accepted for leadership training.

Using the interviews, participant writings, publicity materials, training documents, and field notes as data, I produced a report tracking and analyzing the communication processes of the initiative. Following the practice of dialogic method, I circulated the rough draft to all participants and asked them for written or oral feedback. A number did respond, in a focus group and in writing; the outcomes of these exchanges were then incorporated into the final draft of the paper, along with a scholarly review of the relevant literature and a discussion of the findings grounded in communication theory.

IV. Findings

A. Beginnings

In this troubled seaside town which I will here call Coastal City, a visitor notices stark contrasts. The beveled glass windows of restored Victorian homes gleam next door to boarded-up dwellings used as crack houses. Near landscaped neighborhoods and parks, blocks of a once-thriving commercial sector sit dilapidated and vacant, and acres of oceanfront property lie empty but for lumps of concrete and broken glass, the owners embroiled in ongoing litigation with city government. As in many similarly situated towns, the desolate lots and abandoned buildings, the grated windows and bolted doors of the business district, contradict the city's past, when it was a thriving seaside resort, and threaten its dreams of an economically solvent future.

While many of the social institutions in Coastal City are White-dominated -- including portions of the medical establishment, churches, the few remaining banks, the bureaucracy, social services and law enforcement -- a great many of the city's Caucasian residents have moved away, and the population is now largely African American and Hispanic. Yet residents of all ethnicities express frustration when talking about the backbiting and corruption which characterize the city's social infrastructure. One lifelong resident called the place "a city of mirrors, a city of illusions and tricks." While racism and political partisanship contribute to the discord, politics in Coastal City are widely seen as a tangle of cronyism and conflicting interests too complex to be blamed exclusively on either.

In the fall of 1996, a group of philanthropic organizations and service agencies began considering new ways to tackle the city's intricate socioeconomic problems. They decided to replicate a state program that created youth activity programs by forming partnerships between individual community activists and existing social service agencies. By forming similar partnerships in Coastal City, the alliance hoped to bring together local activists who could cooperate with the city's existing factions but not be controlled by them. Ironically, the organizations making up the coalition did not see themselves as a part of the city's complicated power structure, although they represented a cross-section of the city's healthier governmental and nonprofit human service agencies.

Plans for the program took shape: participants would be chosen for their commitment to the community and their creative ideas for youth activity projects. The organizers would offer each participant up to $4,000 in seed money to carry out a youth activity project. The money would be available only after each participant had completed a "leadership training" course of several months and submitted a formal grant proposal. The training would focus on grant writing, community organizing, media relations, conflict resolution, negotiating the political system, and other skills. Each "trainee" would work with one of the community service agencies in the alliance. The organizers saw the training sessions as a way to empower group members to work within the existing power structure and bind them into a cooperative team with a united voice; however, it was clear that they did not intend the group to challenge existing social structures or power distribution within the city in any way.

The coalition hired a paid coordinator and accepted 10 of 39 applicants to the program, now called the Coastal City Capability Corps. Most were long-term residents. Some were already active in public life, and knew each other from political campaigns, neighborhood watches, or church. The candidates worked as a dispatcher; an entertainer; an enterpreneur; a real estate broker; an advertising assistant; a teacher's assistant; owner of a dance school; a bookkeeper; a corporate supervisor; and a retired nurse. Eight of the 10 were African American, one was Haitian American, and one was Caucasian. Seven were female and three were male. (Chosen as interns, an African American woman and a Caucasian woman took part in the training but did not receive grants. The author, a Caucasian woman, was deemed a "community partner" under the same terms.)

Despite differences in life experience, political orientation, education, ethnicity, gender and personality, people named to the Coastal City Capability Corps shared two common values as the program began: All said they believed in the city's ability to rebuild itself through community participation, and all said they were committed to making the city a better place for children and teenagers in which to grow up.

B. Meaning production - in search of new understanding

The Coastal City Capability Corps kicked off in October 1996 with a ceremony at City Hall, and the training sessions began with a weekend camping retreat soon after. As Davis & Jasinski (1993) note, groups use *visualization* when they share visions that identify and prioritize their values and goals; the retreat's activities were the first effort of the Corps to encourage members to see themselves as a tightly knit group dedicated to the city's rebuilding. Over several cold, wet days in the woods, the members of the group got to know one another for the first time, trying out trust-building group exercises and helping one another over log bridges, rushing creeks, and a high ropes course strung across the treetops. In the evenings, they sat in front of a blazing fireplace to get warm and to join in discussions about themselves and their hopes.

When they reflected on the experience, several group members said they had found that first weekend together a compelling experience. "That retreat in the cold and wet, that was good. Nobody wanted to be there, so we bonded," one participant said. "I was made to feel comfortable, because you really had to rely on everybody. There was not one person who didn't want to help." Another noted that the trip had helped her to appreciate her own courage in unfamiliar circumstances. "I will never forget that. The challenges they put us through -- not that I was afraid, but not knowing I would just jump into everything the way I did. It was a real eye-opener." Another, born in another country, said his early skepticism about the program had evaporated when he heard others talking about how they loved their city as he loved his own home, far away.

> I went back a few years ago to my city and I realize now everything is different. This city used to be beautiful -- my city was very beautiful too -- and now it's not the same. That clicked, because everyone in the group had a commitment to do something about it, to work toward a better place. I realize that we have the same desire.

For participants who would say later that the training program had made them visualize themselves as part of a community, the connection began here. However, others found these rituals dubious:

> Going out to swing on these vines for this bonding thing, what was that about? It was nice to get away, it was cute and everything, but what was the point? I never see the rest of those people. None of those people invited me to their house for a cup of coffee or tea, nothing. I didn't make any friends.

Another said forcefully, "There's a lot of negative, jealous people in this group. Please, it's no bonding." For some, the invitation to share a vision with other group members emotionally seemed pointless.

After the camping trip, the program offered a series of weekend learning sessions designed to equip participants with new leadership skills. In their observations of group empowerment, Davis & Jasinksi (1993) note that groups use communication to *allocate*, or distribute and manage material resources. Although the Corps did not name its strategies this way, its actions demonstrated the pursuit of these conceptual goals. For example, many of the participants said they were drawn to the program in the first place by its offering of seed money for youth projects. Looking back, several mentioned that the most useful part of the program was being exposed to the basics of grant writing. "I am richer for meeting these other people, and I don't want to downplay that," said one participant. "But the grant writing -- that's a very valuable piece of information. You can go out with that and help other people with that." Another member agreed. "The grant writing portion was the best part of the whole thing. I now know there's a lot more financial resources that people are willing to give, and this is the process you go through to get it."

Groups also use communication to *legitimate*, or establish authority (Davis & Jasinksi, 1993). In other training sessions, the candidates heard from veteran organizers and activists, historians, educators, and public officials. They learned about creating coalitions to share local power, and heard an activist from another city explain how he had built a broad base of support from his community's financial, educational, and social institutions. The group discussed gaining access to Coastal City's existing political system by learning the "rules" of winning the ear of politicians and the public. Members took a look at the area's social and political history with long-time residents and a historian. And they took part in group conflict management exercises in the vein of Myers-Briggs, "True Colors," and similar approaches that promote the understanding of interpersonal behavioral attributes.

Davis & Jasinski (1993) observe that groups use *signification* to define themselves as public actors and shape public perception of events, using rituals, ceremonies and messages to share the meaning of their efforts with others. In accord with that view, the group's inaugural and graduation events were staged at public halls and attended by crowds of people including representatives of the local print and broadcast media. At a "graduation" ceremony, members received certificates of completion and made speeches about their experiences. Corps members were also encouraged to take part in other symbolic public events, and several of them played key roles in organizing a "Stand for the Children Day," "Make a Difference Day," and other civic gatherings staged for the betterment of the city.

Media coverage was another form of public *signification*. Participants were urged to seek publicity aggressively, and during the year a constant stream of stories and photos appeared in small local newspapers. Even the large regional newspaper took an interest in the group, though some participants viewed this attention with suspicion. "They make us the brunt of their news," said one.

> They act like they're doing us this big favor by working with us. But they're not going to give us any accolades. They say, 'Here again, here comes somebody in, the benefactors. They're giving the poor people all this money.' Then they're watching me to see what I do with that money. That's so that if anything goes wrong and if anybody has any complaints, they'll be the first to know.

Still, this member overcame her distrust, created a thick press kit about her youth project, and let herself be made the focus of several news articles.

The members of the corps were heavily engaged in meaning production through communication. In training, implementing their youth projects, and taking part in other community events, they worked to visualize common goals, allocate resources such as grant money and volunteers, signify their new status as community activists, and legitimate their status to the existing networks of local knowledge and power.

C. Reframing - Looking for new definitions

Though it did not use the term, the Corps employed the strategic communication concept of *reframing* to pursue its goal of enabling grassroots leaders. E. Goffman (1959) and Mehan & Wood (1975) assert that the members of a group can use language to create a more desirable impression of themselves. By encouraging members to see themselves as "leaders," the Corps did influence people to reframe themselves. Said one participant:

> I consider myself shy. But when you find something you enjoy doing and you can share with other people, you just want to do it. That's very powerful. You don't hesitate to go and do what you need to do. You look within yourself and say, I know I can do this -- I don't know how -- but I can.

Though not identified as such by the organizers, some facets of the program did encourage members to construct new views of themselves and to present themselves to the public in a different way.

For example, as part of the effort to lead group members to new images of themselves, the organizers held some of the training sessions in the plush corporate offices or mahogany-tabled board rooms of large local firms. These offices were situated well outside Coastal City, in the more economically thriving industrial areas of the region. The group's coordinator observed that this was an effort to "put people in positions they've never been in before" and give them a new feeling of entitlement:

> As much as it is uncomfortable to go into the bowels of (corporations), community people should go. They are going to know what corporate America is like. Down the road, these may be the people they're going to go to for grants. They need to know their language. Feeling like you have a right to be in certain places is access to power in a way.

Group members were also brought into contact with elected officials, corporate trainers, organizers, and others who explained ways of plugging into the social structure and getting things done at the community level. Another member of the alliance noted:

> We wanted to provide individuals with the tools that are necessary to move a project, to teach them to go through the maze, the system. There are individuals out there who want to do things and think they can just go out and do them. They don't understand you have to go through the bureaucracy to get things done. A lot of people in the community don't recognize the red tape, the bureaucracy.

At the same time, she noted, the purpose of these meetings was also to encourage a sense of entitlement among group members, a conviction that "the community belongs to them, and they could be sitting up there (in elected offices) making decisions."

Some participants found such peeks at the power structure inspirational, like one who said the training sessions made him feel like "a part of the solution." One observed that, "I already had access to that knowledge and resources they trained us in, but if I wasn't already able to walk into the mayor's office, or go talk to this or that city official, the information was in there, and I could have found it." A third participant said the training had given her a stronger view of the city's possibilities, as well as her own strengths.

> Just being exposed to the people we were exposed to, you know what there is to be tapped into, so you know more. And if you know more, and there's something you want to get done, you're more confident about going out there and doing it.

Others found the exposure to corporate officers and politicians superfluous, and discounted most of the information they received during training sessions. "I was already involved in the community and already active," a participant noted. Another said she had already had a lot of leadership experience in her community. "I just do what I have to do. See a hole, fill it," she said. A third said, "I'm sorry, a lot of that stuff was boring to me. I've done it. I don't need to go sit there and learn to do something I already do on my job every day."

Whether or not individual members believed they had benefited from the training, all felt that *others* in the group had been enabled by it. A participant noted:

> Each person gets what they can out of it, and they just take that little piece away and work with it. It may not be a big piece, it may just be a little piece. Whether people say outright or not that they got anything out of it, down the road they're going to see.

The concept of reframing purports that people use communication practices to redraft their own self-images and to create a different impression of themselves for others.

Training was only one area where members of the Coastal City Capability Corps used reframing; they also redefined their identities when collaborating with community agencies, soliciting funds or volunteers, staging public awareness events, and seeking appointments to volunteer positions. Although impressions of the training varied widely, a number of these other experiences, discussed below, indicated that reframing was a key part of the program's strategy.

D. Experiencing empowerment

Participants defined themselves as newly enabled or empowered in a number of ways during the first year of the program. One of these was the completion of grant proposals, submitted when the training had ended. "Grant writing is really tough," the coordinator noted. "It was hard, but a lot of people were glad they did it. It was an accomplishment." While some members of the group did say they did feel a new sense of confidence after writing their grant proposals, others looked to more tangible measures of success, such as gaining cooperation and securing resources for their youth projects.

In light of Coastal City's reputation for conflict and fragmentation, cooperative group effort was seen as an impressive achievement. Several of the candidates were members of competing political factions, and had previously found themselves on opposing sides in elections and local initiatives. But as they worked together, one participant said, "people forgot for a while their self interest for the common good of the group." One of the organizers noted that the program had led to "people talking to each other who wouldn't normally talk to each other." Sharing the common goal of revitalizing their neighborhoods, some participants said they had been able to overlook their former political affiliations and experience a new allegiance to one another. One noted, "To start out not a group and end up working as a team, it was a good process."

For several of the participants, this recognition was a powerful, transformative experience.

> I was able to put aside my political views and work with other people whose views were different from mine. When you see people at meetings and they're being very vocal, you start to think you're going to have a problem with them. But you just have to keep focused and have to keep the political stuff out of it. We now have gained a lot more respect for each other's views. We can now go to each other.

By the end of the training sessions, the coordinator opined, most of the candidates were "able to see each other as really good people, even though before they had distrusted and disliked each other vehemently. It was good for people to experience that they really do want the same things."

Another area of perceived development was the acquisition of grant monies, volunteers, and other resources for the implementation of the youth projects. By the end of summer 1997, five of the leaders had carried out their proposed youth activity projects, serving about 150 children. A youth empowerment club offered teens programs in cultural awareness, small business development, job skills, and internships. In a fitness program, children had discussions about nutrition, health and self-esteem, followed by exercise. Another project took groups of teens on tours of historically black colleges and offered motivation toward finishing high school. Groups of children learned about the sea and its natural environment through hands-on experience. A cultural enrichment program offered children classes in dance, arts and crafts, and photography, all taught by visiting artists. The leadership candidates who staged these projects had not only secured their grant funds from the consortium, but had also obtained volunteer participation, the donation of materials, and sites for the staging of their projects. One participant noted that she felt empowered by the implementation of her youth program "because I accomplished something that I wanted to do. It puts some credibility under my belt."

Observers called the candidates empowered because of other achievements as well. In June 1997, members of the group organized a "Stand for Children" rally, in conjunction with a larger national movement. In September 1997, another member staged a protest of the Abner Louima police brutality incident in New York City, attracting hundreds of community residents. Group members took active roles at other rallies and health fairs, and were appointed to volunteer service boards in the city or the region. Several were chosen for leadership spots within the organization of the Corps itself.

When participants looked back over their memories of the leadership program, most expressed the "rejuvenative and recreational emotionalism" observed in groups by Lakin & Costanzo (1979). They talked about a shared sense of warmth and caring among their fellow group members, a feeling that all were a part of a larger whole. One participant described the group experience this way, though others expressed a similar mood:

> It came to a point where everyone helped each other and we coached each other. We wanted everyone to succeed. Support. Knowing that we are in it to do something good for the community. It was a magical moment for us to get it in such a way. Beyond our individual projects, we want to do something better.

For many of the people involved, the year-long struggle to create the Coastal City Capability Corps was viewed as an enabling adventure. "You don't build community over night," the coordinator observed. "But when we see each other in the community, I don't think we are going to easily forget that we shared something."

E. Stumbling blocks amid stepping stones

At the end of the first year, however, not all of the participants believed that they had achieved what they set out to do. Not all observers felt that community empowerment was taking place. Four of the members who designed projects had them approved, but had not implemented them. Although the organizers were not perturbed, saying that group members could take a year to use the grant money, privately some said they did not expect particular group members to finish their projects. One of the ten leadership candidates dropped out in the middle of the training sessions, and did not complete a plan for a youth project. She also did not accept any further invitations to participate in the group's activities, and she declined to be interviewed for this study.

Whether they had finished a project or not, a few of the members said they had encountered many frustrations during the experience and continued to feel uncomfortable about their fellow candidates, the project coordinator, or some of the nonprofit agencies which had organized the program. Said one: "To do my next project, I'm pulling in other people in the community. I'm not asking the group members, because maybe they wouldn't give me their time. Maybe they don't have the time. Maybe I don't want their time." Another candidate said he resented that no one made it clear to him initially that the Corps' activites were completely non-profit. He was distressed to learn, late in the training process, that his own ailing business could not receive any of the grant money:

> There's no incentive, because sure, you get money, but you don't get to put it in your pocket. They were going to give me four thousand dollars to put a project together, but I wouldn't get any of that. People are motivated by money nowadays, that's how it is. The police protect and serve, but they get paid for it. Nobody's in the game for free any more. It's okay to be a pioneer, but sometimes you want to come in on the receiving end, too.

Other participants said they did not see eye-to-eye with the organizers, or with the community agencies with which they were asked to work. One had planned to include youthful drug offenders in a business development workshop, but met with alarmed resistance from some organizers, who objected to contact between the city's youth and young people who already had criminal records. The candidate eventually agreed to redesign his project so that no felons would be included, but he felt betrayed:

> They come into the community and they say they want to start some grassroots leadership here, that people in the community know what to do, and then here they're trying to micro-manage our projects. I told them, I don't need you folks. They do give you this money, but folks need to know there are restrictions that go along with it.

Other leadership candidates were offended that some of the nonprofit agencies treated them like and referred to them as "clients," a social service term implying the dependent relationship of someone receiving public assistance. And participants were further ruffled when, midway through the grant process, some of the nonprofit representatives suddenly began calling for background checks on them.

Ultimately, though the group and its coordinator declared themselves resoundingly successful in reaching their goals, the program's organizers were unwilling to come to conclusions about the achievements of the program after only one year. One said she thought that the participants had not yet received enough mentoring to become effective community leaders:

> These are people who need guidance. How to move ahead. A lot of these people needed to have somebody holding their hands. They needed a tighter structure of supervision as they moved into this. My feeling was they didn't have that.

A second coalition member declared, "Who's to say they're leaders yet? We created a mechanism and gave them an opportunity which did not exist before. Whatever they do with those skills remains to be seen." Another wondered whether the leadership lessons taught during the training might have unanticipated effects later.

> There are a lot of people there who don't like dealing with whites and don't like dealing with authority. For the majority of them, (the training) did improve their self esteem, and they were learning techniques that would give them more control over their own lives, and over what is happening in the city. A lot of them have become more vocal, and that may lead to some kind of confrontation before it is all over.

One man associated with the program saw the encouragement of leadership in individuals as a feel-good measure, but questioned whether it would be an effective vehicle for actual community enablement in the longer term. Though not representative of the whole group, the more critical observations of participants, organizers and observers have value, demonstrating that the creation of a short-term sense of emotional connection and self-confidence in people may be related to, but is not the same as, the generation of enduring social, political or economic power among disenfranchised groups within a community. Leadership programs may allow selected individuals to share a rhetorical vision and create new public identities, but they must also create and sustain ongoing civic participation and genuine social change.

F. The dialogue continues

I had hoped that the research would prove useful to the group in understanding the communication processes involved in its efforts, so at the end of the first year, I circulated a rough draft of this article and invited collaborative dialogue from participants in the study.

The draft set forth the observational and interview data in this report but omitted the literature review and analysis. As in this article, no names were used. After reading the paper, eight of the participants agreed to meet and discuss it. The meeting lasted for three hours. Two of the attendees also wrote their reactions to the paper and gave them to me. Another participant did not attend, but sent a letter containing her remarks. The themes to emerge from the meeting and the written comments have been incorporated into this paper.

Some group members seemed alarmed and disturbed by the report, which they interpreted as profoundly "negative," while others said they found it true to their experience. A few members said they were offended by the report's appearance, terminology, or analytical tone; one said the report was intimidating because it had a cover and plastic binding, which seemed to indicate that it was an official document instead of a draft. Another was put off by my use of the term "participant observer," saying that it conveyed detachment and an evaluative stance rather than personal involvement. Perhaps the most affected member was the woman who wrote her responses rather than attending the meeting. Although she initially accepted me as a fellow group member, she wrote, "I know now that after reading this mostly negative report that she was an observer, as if we were 'Lab Mice' in an experiment." She went on to give the article "a D for defamation."

Several members said they were jarred to read the more negative comments made by their fellow Corps members in interviews. The coordinator of the program believed that I had intentionally selected only the most critical or disparaging "sound bites" out of the interviews. "I feel the negativity was too large in that document.. You can pick and choose what quotes you use. You can pick and choose what you write," she said. Others disagreed with her reading, saying they believed the report was accurate and representative. One said:

> She only expressed what people told her. Everything she got she got from us. What I said was not taken out of context. If she had misquoted me, I would have some problems with it. If she got all this negativity, that's what she got. If that's how they said it, that's how they said it. When I see myself represented in there, it's practically verbatim.

About half the participants at this meeting believed that the report's criticisms of the Corps had come from less-involved members who had personal problems or "just didn't 'get it'" - people who failed to fully understand the group's philosophy. This was not the case. Participants in all but two of the interviews I conducted were critical of some aspects of the program or fellow participants. During the feedback session, one woman specifically objected to a lengthy comment in the report, apparently not recognizing it as her own.

Several group members said they were dumbfounded to read the alienated remarks of some fellow participants because they had experienced such warmth in the group. "I was totally just flabbergasted because I prided myself on being such an observer, but I did not expect this," said one person. "I never thought people were feeling that bad. All that opportunity we had to talk, and they never said anything." Others said that a lack of connection was to be expected from certain members who had been discontented with the program's vision all along:

> I knew some people had difficulty dealing with things. I saw the controversy when other people didn't think [their concerns] was going to be dealt with. When we opened up and talked about it, they were not totally open with what they felt, but we knew something was going on anyway.

Another said she found the report's revelations helpful because they identified areas of apparent miscommunication within the group and would help members address these potential stumbling blocks in the future. "This is a beautiful thing, because of what we're doing right now, what we're finding out about one another right now," she said.

The group also disputed the overall function of the study. Some had expected the report to resemble a press release or an endorsement, and were disappointed that it did not. The project coordinator said the report was unfair and "could be very dangerous," though she did not specify in what way. A group member said the study could be read as a negative evaluation - "It has 'conclusions,' like we've come to some conclusions here," she said. Both said they the report omitted "the positive side of the story." Other group members understood that the report was not an evaluation, but a systematic exploration of the group's communication practices, told in part through participants' voices:

> I want our story to be told, to be read. How are we going to be a model for state and national programs if our story is not told? Go ahead and tell our story, let us help to tell our story, and then when an evaluator comes along later, they can look back and see what we went through.

In this discussion, I reminded group members that the academic version of the report would contain no information identifying the people involved in the research and would be shared with communication scholars, not with the Corps' funders or oversight agencies.

This part of the work was personally difficult. Patti Lather (1991) has noted that research which illuminates the usually hidden social processes of daily life and its possibilities for transformation may also uncover disquieting contradictions. Rather than turning aside from such paradoxes, she argues, scholars must continue to test new methods for gathering, analyzing, and validating data, and must open their processes and results to examination by others.

In this attempt to use dialogic method to recognize participants' lived experience and allow them access to and benefit from the research findings, however, the method may have been more distracting than revealing. Participants seemed highly uncomfortable with a dispassionately written account of experiences which had carried so much emotional weight for them. Some felt betrayed by the remarks of their fellow participants or people in positions of power in the program. At some points the study was at odds with the group's rhetorical vision of itself. Certain observations appeared to threaten group members' fragile new image of themselves as a cadre of empowered community leaders.

As researcher, I felt that the group's overall reception of the paper was one of distress and concern. This session left me wondering whether sharing the findings of this study with participants had contributed to the CCCC grassroots community-building effort, as I had hoped it might, or worked to its detriment.

V. Conclusions

This study identifies the strategic use of two communication practices, meaning production and reframing, during the first year of a community empowerment program.

Although the local mass media repeatedly framed Coastal City as troubled and its residents as corrupt or powerless, and though many citizens shared this view, the leadership group worked to create and communicate a different reality by means of linguistic and symbolic frames, which it shared among its members and disseminated to the public. This study documents how these practices enabled some group members to construct visions of a renewed city and gain the confidence to imagine themselves as public leaders. It also identifies a number of constraints encountered by group members trying to create and share these visions.

By focusing on the use of communication as a strategic tool which can enable members of non-dominant social groups to empower themselves in the face of negative prevailing views of themselves, this research contributes to our broader knowledge in three ways. It illuminates the specific communication practices and tactics used in a grassroots empowerment initiative to create, share and manage meaning. It represents these practices in the language and reasoning used by participants. And it identifies some of the limitations of these practices as catalysts for social change.

Future research in the area of communication and empowerment is needed to address the long-term sociopolitical impact of such initiatives. Longitudinal studies should address the question of whether the short-term sensation of empowerment generated in some leadership programs becomes a lasting phenomenon in participants' lives. Studies should also address whether empowerment efforts among disenfranchised groups create new kinds of leadership, or merely integrate new participants into existing hierarchical social forms. Institutional studies of the changing power networks of contemporary urban communities are also needed if we are to develop more effective strategies for the creation of grassroots civic and economic participation in the 21st century.

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Fabienne Darling-Wolf
The University of Iowa
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
fabienne-darling@uiowa.edu
2100 Scott Blvd. #127
Iowa City, IA 52240
335-5623 or 354-7090

On the possibility of communicating: Critical theory, feminism, and social position

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On the possibility of communicating: Critical theory, feminism, and social position

As a white European conducting feminist research on the Japanese media, I have sometimes found my choice of focus challenged. One recent critique of my work came from an African American male acquaintance who maintained that as a white women, I was not qualified to examine racial issues relating to the representation of feminine beauty in Japanese magazines. Despite the extensive ethnographic work I planned to undertake, my acquaintance maintained that my racial origin would prevent me from usefully assessing why Japanese women might buy and use the publications. His criticism illustrates the extent to which belief in the epistemological significance of the socio-cultural position from which research is undertaken has entered our collective academic consciousness.

This incident prompted me to wonder whether a racially sensitive involvement in “cross-cultural” research was possible on my part and if so, desirable. Despite my relative familiarity with the Japanese culture and language, should I stick with a topic “closer to me?” As a U.S. immigrant, would I even be qualified to do research on/with American women, or should I concentrate on my culture of origin, which I left ten years ago? Wouldn’t I then risk being deemed subjective because too emotionally involved with my topic? Did my acquaintance have privileged knowledge of all aspects of racial oppression due to his membership in a minority group in the United States or did my gender allow me some insight into the situation of women in Japan?

These questions point to the complexity embedded in the recognition that all knowledge is situated and to the need for an elaborate understanding of the role experience and social position play in shaping academic research. Tracing the origins of the belief in the epistemological significance of social position to early critical communication research, this paper explores the further theoretical development of this concept in feminist scholarship, particularly feminist cultural studies. I argue that looking back at critical communication research can provide a useful new perspective on some of the theoretical dilemmas of contemporary feminist thought. Critical communication research might especially help in taking the debate over the significance of position beyond the realm of academic discourse into politically grounded everyday practices.

Critical communication research and the images in our heads

The concept that the social position from which we conduct research is epistemologically significant is at the center of much theoretical debate today—from radical feminism to postmodernist theories. It is rendered particularly critical by the struggle in numerous emancipatory movements to more adequately address issues of diversity and difference. But the fact that notions of "positionality"[1] and critiques of early feminist standpoint theory are at the forefront of much current scholarship should not lead us to forget that considerations of the epistemological significance of social position have long been a central component of critical theory.

As early as the 1920s, Walter Lippmann argued in *Public Opinion* that what we know is dependent on the social environment in which we evolve. He maintained that our view of the world is inevitably based on a set of stereotypes, often perpetuated by the press, which prevents us from truly understanding those outside our social group. As he explains, "The stereotype not only saves time in a busy life and is a defense of our position in society, but tends to preserve us from all the bewildering effect of trying to see the world steadily and see it whole" (Lippmann, 1965, 75). Therefore, even opinions conflicting with our understanding of the world are unlikely to change our view, as our social environment promotes a process of selective perception which allows information contradictory to what we "know" to be rationalized to confirm rather than challenge stereotypes. In this process, our understanding of the world is consequently shaped by the particular stereotypes surrounding us, which, according to Lippmann, are almost impossible to escape.

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[1] To use the term generally employed in cultural studies.

Similarly, George Herbert Mead maintained that individuals define themselves in relationship to their social environment through communication with others. Thus, "The process of communication simply puts the intelligence of the individual at his own disposal. But the individual that has this ability is a social individual. . . . [I]t is only in society that he can attain this sort of a self which will make it possible for him to turn back on himself and indicate to himself the different things he can do" (Mead, 1934, 243). Thus, communication with others is limited to a particular social environment, individuals are defined by the community to which they belong. Again, contact with communities outside our social environment might not necessarily lead to the shattering of stereotypes, as individuals also define themselves in opposition to outsiders. As Mead notes,

> We are able to hold on to ourselves in little things; in the ways in which we feel ourselves to be superior. If we find ourselves defeated at some point we take refuge in feeling that somebody is not as good as we are. . . . Hate comes back to the sense of superiority of one community over another (315).

The belief in the ability of social forces to shape our perception of the world led some early communication theorists to reject traditional notions of objectivity and rationality. They maintained that we can never fully free ourselves from our experience, emotions, and stereotypes, and that denying their existence only serves to hide the ideological context in which research is conducted (Dewey, 1927).

A few decades later, members of the Frankfurt School continued to challenge the dominant social-scientific paradigm of American communication research by stressing the influence of the larger socio-cultural context on research and theory. As Max Horkheimer (1972) maintained, "The scholar and his science are incorporated into the apparatus of society; his achievements are a factor in the conservation and continuous renewal of the existing state of affairs, no matter what fine names he gives to what he does" (196). Recognizing that societies are stratified into groups with unequal access to power, Frankfurt School theorists emphasized the epistemological significance of social class and pressed for theory honestly grounded in a specific ideological position. Walter Benjamin

(1978), for instance, criticized bourgeois writers for not acknowledging the fact that their writing serves a particular class position, and defined a "more advanced type of writer" as one recognizing his or her contribution to a particular constituency (220) . Furthermore, Benjamin argued that the progressive opinions, attitudes, or dispositions of intellectuals toward a specific constituency were not enough to guarantee their political usefulness and that consequently, "the place of the intellectual in the class struggle can be identified, or, better, chosen, only on the basis of his position in the process of production" (228). In a word, Benjamin suggested that intellectuals not only talk the talk, but also walk the walk of political involvement.

More recently, British cultural theorists have displayed a similar belief in the significance of social environment in defining what is perceived as reality (Hall, 1982), and stressed the importance of lived experience—mediated by our membership in distinctive social groups—in determining what we "know." Their definition of "culture" as both the meanings and values of distinctive social groups and classes and the lived practices through which those 'understandings' are expressed (Hall, 1986) is an extension of the Frankfurt School's and even the pragmatists' concept of community. Again, British cultural theorists argue that our experiences as members of a particular culture shapes how we view the world, and how we communicate about it (Williams, 1958).

The recognition in each of these theoretical traditions that knowledge is situated represents a clear challenge to not only traditional American communication research—based on a social-scientific paradigm—but to the entire foundation of American journalism. The argument that we cannot escape our experience exposes objectivity as a myth. Furthermore, this argument implicates the media in the perpetuation of the dominant ideology. While traditional communication research has often concluded that if the media cannot be shown to change people's opinions or behaviors they can be considered to have no effects, critical communication scholars argue just the opposite. Not affecting the way people see the world is exactly the media's effect: the maintenance of an oppressive status quo. Hence, communication originating from groups representing the dominant ideology can contribute to the difficulty of truly knowing others by perpetuating, and possibly creating, an environment which serves to naturalize such ideology and confirm our stereotypes about each other. On the other hand, however, communication is also the solution to the disconnection on which the dominant order rests. "True" communication could thus be defined as the ability to overcome the boundaries of our limited social environment to engage the other and possibly find grounds for coalition.

Consequently, the recognition that the social position from which knowledge emanates is epistemologically significant has taken particular importance in theories developed by groups with an emancipatory political agenda attempting to free themselves from the oppressive rationalization of the status quo as "objective reality." The critique of objectivity and emphasis on the significance of social position and lived experience has, in particular, always been a central theme of feminist epistemology.

Feminism, position and objectivity

Like Frankfurt school theorists, feminists have good reasons to be suspicious of the cult of objectivity. As early as 1949, Simone De Beauvoir pointed to the numerous ways in which "objective" science had been used to argue female inferiority (de Beauvoir, 1976). Ever since, feminists have revealed the ideal of dispassionate inquiry as a myth used to bolster the epistemic authority of the dominant group—those having the power to define their own point of view as the "objective" perspective (Berman, 1989; Farganis, 1989; Jaggar, 1989; Wilshire, 1989). As Catharine MacKinnon (1987), one of the most radical critics of objectivity notes, "The one who has the social access to being that self which takes the stance that is allowed to be objective, that objective person who is a subject, is socially male" (55).

Objectivity is a particularly clever myth, however. By constructing the dominant view as uncontaminated by emotions, it allows the dismissal of the politically grounded inscribed into the context of Western feminist scholarship, placing them in a position of subordination in feminist theoretical and textual productions.

Thus, minority scholars have taken white feminists to task for not going far enough in their theoretical development of the epistemological significance of social position. Their challenge put into question the very possibility of developing a politically useful understanding of social groups outside our own community. For instance, Linda Alcoff (1995) suggests that speaking from a privileged location is always discursively dangerous. No matter how well intentioned, the practice of the privileged speaking on behalf of the less privileged other, has often resulted in reinforcing rather than challenging structures of oppression. Using the example of Ann Cameron's efforts to speak for indigenous women, Alcoff explains that despite the white Canadian author's good intentions, her work was argued to be disempowering for indigenous authors, as her privileged status gave her books greater authority over the latter's. Furthermore, her act of speaking takes new significance when considered in the wider context of white theft of subaltern cultural production, as described—among others—by bell hooks (1992). As Alcoff notes, "some voices may be de-authorized on grounds that are simultaneously political and epistemic. Any statement will invoke the structures of power allied with the social location of the speaker, aside from the speaker's intentions or attempts to avoid such invocations" (105). As a partial solution, these theorists suggest that we always consider the act of speaking in its larger social context.

Therefore, the works of "Third World" scholars and members of minority groups in the United States have helped problematize the concept of "women's experience" and remind us that women can also oppress each other. This challenge to simplistic interpretations of experience has led to the development of more pluralistic interpretations of the self, in which women are seen as occupying multiple positions (Mascia-Lees et al., 1989). It has helped feminists start to move beyond the double consciousness of Abu-Lughod's halfie to a multiple consciousness based on multiple selves and multiple positions. Rather than contesting standpoint theory—as is often argued—this more manifold understanding of experience supports the assertion of earlier feminists and critical communication theorists that the social environment in which we evolve powerfully influences what we know and how we can communicate in numerous and varied ways. This theoretical development is attempting to address the full implications of Lippmann's 1922 assertion that "We have learned to note many selves, and to be a little less ready to issue judgment upon them" (112). It warns us, however, against the dangers of lumping individuals together on the basis of a simplistic conception of social position and social organization. By reminding us that, at any point in time, each individual belongs to numerous interconnected social communities, it has had the effect of leading the discussion of the meaning of social position toward a more personal and individual level.

Paralysis, essentialism, and political action: The dangers of multiple selves

While the current challenge to simplistic understandings of the significance of social position is compelling and useful, I believe there are also potential dangers associated with placing too much emphasis on the fact that we all embody multiple selves.

Arguing that one can only speak for a group one belongs can have disturbing implications. First of all, as Linda Alcoff (1995) warns, if we assume that we can only speak for groups to which we belong, "the complexity and multiplicity of group membership might result in 'communities' composed of single individuals" (99). This assumption has particularly disturbing implications for those groups which do not typically have access to the means of production of academic discourse. Alcoff notes that "There is a strong, albeit contested, current within feminism which holds that speaking for others—even for other women—is arrogant, vain, unethical, and politically illegitimate" (97). But if speaking for others is politically illegitimate in a Western academic environment dominated by a white middle class elite, how are the voices of groups excluded from this environment to be heard? How can issues of class, in particular, ever be adequately addressed by highly educated middle class intellectuals—the kind of people who may have the means to publish their work? One might conclude, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) does, that the subaltern simply cannot speak. Unfortunately, such a conclusion is not particularly politically useful. Furthermore, as Andrew Lakritz (1995) suggests, claiming that the subaltern cannot speak is an act of naming the oppressed as silent, and if being oppressed is lack of voice and agency, naming the oppressed as silent silences the oppressed. Thus, by stating that the subaltern cannot speak, we are contributing to the subaltern's oppression.

Diane Elam (1995) argues that refusing to speak can also be a means of turning away from responsibility. Alcoff notes that even a position of retreat is not neutral as we cannot separate our praxis from that of others and that "retreat from speech . . . allows the continued dominance of current discourses and acts by omission to reinforce their dominance" (108). The decision to move over itself comes from a position of privilege, and not speaking for the other "may result merely in a retreat into a narcissistic yuppie lifestyle in which a privileged person takes no responsibility whatsoever for her society" (Alcoff, 1995). It seems then that however difficult it might be, feminists must take up the challenge of speaking for others if their work is to acquire political significance.

Attempts to do so, however, illustrate the difficulty of effectively taking into account the multiple nature of women's social position. For instance, academic feminists have not always adequately addressed issues of their own participation in, or at least benefiting from, capitalist modes of production based on the exploitation of some classes of society—i.e., issues of class remain a blind spot in much feminist work. Leslie Bow (1995) observes that theorists like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak or Trinh Minh-hà position themselves as third world cultural critics rather than as Asian Americanists. She questions the politics inherent in this distancing from American national affiliation by researchers benefiting from U.S. resources. Rey Chow (1993) charges Chinese intellectuals speaking within the American academy on behalf of the neglected other in China with a certain level of dishonesty, especially if the former do not acknowledge the privilege afforded by their position overseas. She notes that the activities of Chinese academics are sometimes less tied to oppressed women in China than to their own careers in the West. As she writes, "If it is true that 'our' speech takes its 'raw materials' from the suffering of the oppressed, it is also true that it takes its capital from the scholarly tradition, from the machineries of literacy and education, which are affordable only to a privileged few" (114). Similarly, Cynthia Enloe (1989) warns that members of privileged classes in the "Third World" might have more in common with middle class members of Western countries than with members of lower classes in their own culture. Her powerful analysis of international politics implicates women of all ethnic and racial backgrounds in the reproduction of an oppressive international division of labor. Thus while appealing to our own subject position might generate rhetorical authority, we should remain aware of the fact that the very structure of authority that allows us to empathize inserts us back into the structure of inequality the identification would dismantle (Lakritz, 1995).

A more cynical analysis of academic work suggests that association with a particular social position might also be consciously employed to further one's own interests rather than those of the group for which we speak. Chow's (1993) Maoist, described in her book *Writing Diaspora*, exemplifies such a possibility. She maintains that identification with the subaltern can be self-interestingly used by academics pressured to include issues of gender, race, or class into their work. Chow describes the Maoist as a person who desires a social order opposed to the one supporting her undertaking, and refuses to acknowledge her own complicity with the very order she is criticizing. While sanctifying and identifying with a generalized non-Western subaltern, the privileged Maoist places herself in a fraudulent position of self-subalternization employed to claim authority and power in academia and uses the subaltern as a "subject" to advance her career. As Chow puts it, "they choose to see in others' powerlessness an idealized image of themselves and refuse to hear in the dissonance between the content and manner of their speech their own complicity with violence" (14).

Self-interested or not, emphasis on the assumed privileged knowledge of oppression of subaltern others can have an essentializing effect. In her essay *The vicar and the virago: Feminism and the problem of identity*, Dympna Callaghan (1995) recounts the story of Rahila Khan, whose writings about Asian girls were published by two feminist publishing houses until they found out that Khan was in fact a male, middle class, white vicar from Brighton named Toby Forward. Callaghan interprets the publishing houses' participation in the mascarade as a sign of "white feminism's still troubled encounter with racial difference" (198). As a side effect of their desire to respond to criticism from minority scholars, "eager to learn" white feminists let their guilt lead them to reductionist and essentializing notions of identity. As Friedman (1995) notes, "At its most extreme this embrace [of "other" women], tends toward a fetishization of women of color that once again reconstitutes them as other caught in the gaze of white feminist desire" (11). While attempting to "give Khan a voice," white feminists treated her as an anthropological case study of an "authentic" other, as exemplified by their constant requests for more "ethnic" writings (Callaghan, 1995; Sawhney, 1995).

The essentialist assumptions of this search for the "authentic" other point to the pitfalls of simplistic constructions of the significance of social position and identity which consider mere membership in a group to constitute epistemic authority. Such assumptions about identity and social position sometimes lead members of minority groups to be placed against their will in the role of representatives for their entire culture. For instance, while she does recognize that her work as a cultural critic is intimately related to her experience as an Asian American woman, Bow (1995) expresses her discomfort with the fact that her Asian female body now serves to authenticate her "knowledge claims" about Asian Americans, Asian women and, to some extent, women of color within the academy. As she notes "[This] makes me acutely aware that we can be positioned not only according to our own agenda, but to that of others" (41-42).

"Native" others are thus put to the difficult task of "authentically" representing their culture, of staging their "exoticism" so that the dominant group "may be granted an opportunity to make a ritualized gesture of piety toward cultural difference" (Sawhney, 208). Yet, if their work does not fit the dominant group's nostalgic notion of authenticity, "native" others might be charged with self interest—as in the case of the Chinese poet Bei Dao accused of being "supremely translatable" by a Western sinologist (Chow, 1993), or of Chow herself being deemed not "really" Chinese. Interestingly, as Lakritz notes, once a "native" writer is judged to be "authentic" enough by the dominant group, she or he may become canonized in the academy and championed as a major cultural voice. Those token "native informants" are, once again, used to assuage the guilt and hide the ignorance of a majority concerned with including multiculturalism in its curriculum. Adopting the other merely to "mascarade as saviors of marginality" (Sawhney, 216), the privileged do not recognize the violence of their act of definition.

Reductionist interpretations of social position can also serve to forbid members of subordinated groups from participating in the dominant cultural discourse. As Trinh Minh-hà (1992) puts it, "we have been herded as people of color to mind only our own culture" (164). Chow observes that the framing of Chinese literature as minority discourse impedes its ascension to the status of world literature, as the rhetoric of universals ensures its ghettoization. Chinese literature is thus trapped in its minority status, because it is that status that gives it legitimacy. Furthermore, within Chinese studies, minority discourse is not simply a fight for the content of oppression but also a fight for the ownership of speaking. She explains that male Chinese authors often denounce feminist scholarship in their efforts to defend tradition, sinocentrism, and heritage. By doing so, such authors claim the minority discourse for themselves and in turn relegate Chinese women to minority status within the field of Asian Studies. Thus, according to Bow (1995), a feminist position might be interpreted as an act of ethnic betrayal in the Asian American community where feminism becomes a standard by which ethnic loyalties are measured. Similarly, bell hooks has been accused of committing acts of betrayal when turning her feminist critique to African American males. She warns that such practices can lead to hazardous self censorship within minority communities (hooks, 1994, 68). In a larger sense, women—deemed, in many cultures, the guardians of tradition—have had to undergo a difficult process of negotiation when defining their cultural and gendered identities. The claims of Japanese feminists, for instance, are sometimes dismissed on the ground that feminists are mere puppets of the West (Fujieda & Fujimura-Fanselow, 1995)—i.e., not "truly" Japanese (see also, Chapkis, 1986; Garnham, 1993).

Thus, while scholars are increasingly attempting to develop theories taking into account the significance of our membership in multiple communities, the application of such theories has, in practice, proven challenging. By attempting to define an authentic ethnic experience, minority scholars—and white scholars attempting to address racial issues—have occasionally committed the kind of essentializing mistakes early white middle class feminist theorists have been criticized for. Not only did they not adequately address the diversity of experience and the multiple interrelated forms of oppression operating within each community—i.e. the fact that we all have multiple selves—but they also sometimes fell into the pitfall of assuming that mere membership in a group gives one automatic and "authentic" access to knowledge about it.

Authenticity, alienation, and experience

A look back at critical communication scholarship can help us identify some of the dangers of such an assumption. Frankfurt school theorists argue that under capitalist modes of production the freedom of individuals is largely illusory as they are alienated from their own experience by a system which makes "man its appendix" (Fromm, 1947, 83). As Hanno Hardt (1993) notes, "The problem of alienation emerges not only as a major threat to the experience of authenticity, but develops as a process of estrangement that characterizes industrial societies in which individuals remain out of touch with themselves" (54). Under such a system, life can be inauthentically lived as individuals are manipulated into serving the interests of the dominant ideology and prevented from truly knowing themselves or others (Habermas, 1968; 1989).

The inauthenticity of experience described by Frankfurt School theorists is based on a Gramscian concept of hegemony. Thus, individuals are convinced to participate in their own oppression, or in what Herbert Marcuse (1989) describes as "voluntary servitude" (278). As Erich Fromm (1947) explains, "their behavior is not a matter of conscious decision as to whether or not to follow the social pattern, but one of *wanting to act as they have to act* and at the same time finding gratification in acting according to the requirements of culture" (77, emphasis in the text). Rather than operating through overt authority, which can more easily lead to rebellion, the dominant capitalist ideology operates through a form of anonymous conformity mediated by the cultural industry promoted in the media. Thus, as Hardt (1993) notes, in the work of critical communication theorists "The question of authenticity is caught up in the specter of a personalized environment in which language and communication reflect a culture of domination, assigned to express involvement or participation and status or prestige in the course of individual recognition through group identification" (53).

Thus, Frankfurt School theorists remind us that the dominant ideology of the social environment in which we evolve might prevent us from authentically experiencing our position. In a word, they warn us that experience can lie to us. While feminist theorists might argue that women and members of other subordinated groups are in a better position to free themselves from alienation than individuals who—due to their relative privilege—can more easily find gratification in supporting the dominant order, the concept of inauthentic experience is certainly present in feminist theory. Feminists do have to account for the fact that not all women are feminists. It is consequently an important point of feminist standpoint theory that women do not necessarily "'see' women or gender more perceptively" (Caplan, 1988, 14). Crucially, feminist theory has had to recognize that women's experience of their lives are not the same as feminist knowledge of women's lives (Hennessy, 1995). Even MacKinnon argues that women can only achieve knowledge of their oppression through a collective and critical form of consciousness raising and marvels at the fact that, considering the power of the oppressive dominant ideology, so many women can actually accede to feminist consciousness (1987; MacKinnon, 1989). As Harding (1995) notes, "women don't 'naturally' have it. We have to struggle politically and conceptually to get it" (127). Or as Chandra Talpade Mohanty puts it, "I challenge the idea that simply being a woman, or being poor or black or Latino, is sufficient ground to assume a politicized oppositional identity" (quoted in Bow, 1995, 43). Similarly, class consciousness is politically achieved rather than a mere factor of membership in a particular socio-economic stratum. "Even the situation of the proletariat is, in this society, no guarantee of correct knowledge" (Horkheimer, 1972, 213). As Williams (1958) explains, "Class feeling is a mode, rather than a uniform possession of all the individuals who might, objectively, be assigned to that class. When we speak, for instance, of a working-class idea, we do not mean that all working people possess it, or even approve of it" (326).

Thus, politically grounded theories have had to negotiate between the belief that our social position and experience can give us privileged knowledge of the system dominating us, and the fact that this knowledge is not necessarily accessible to us merely on the basis of this very position—nor on the basis of our biological makeup. Either ends of this tension has potentially detrimental implications for emancipatory movements.

The critique of objectivity and the assertion that experience and social position is epistemologically significant can be turned against feminists by interpretationists arguing that if one accepts that knowledge is situated, then feminist claims become one point of view among many others. As Sandra Harding (1990) notes, "This position functions to justify the silencing of women/feminists no less than its objectivist twin by refusing to recognize existing power relations between partial and perverse beliefs and social power. The authors of interpretationist texts pretend that they are just plain folks like women, feminist critics, and everyone else" (88). Cultural analyses conducted from what is generally considered a "postmodern" perspective sometimes display a similar tendency by celebrating subaltern acts of resistance against dominant ideology at the expense of more clearly political action.

The fear of committing the kind of essentializing mistakes described here can also, as I have argued, have a paralyzing effect (Bordo, 1993) and trap feminists into the kind of interpretationism Harding (1990) warns us against. Placing too much emphasis on the difficulty of achieving and communicating "authentic" knowledge, or—to use the concept of critical communication theorists—of freeing ourselves from alienation, can trap intellectuals into depressed theoretical debates which do little to improve the condition of their constituency. While Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1988) assertion that the subaltern cannot speak urges us to recognize the double bind of identification—which either results in the subaltern's protection against her own kind or in the assimilation of her voice into the project of imperialism—it does little to challenge structures of oppression (Chow, 1993).

On the possibility of communicating

The politically paralyzing proclivity of extreme relativism has particularly disturbing implications for theories with an emancipatory agenda. The emancipatory potential of feminism and minority movements rests on the possibility of understanding others' position and speaking for, about, and with them. Differently stated, the political effectiveness of feminism rests on the possibility of *communicating*. Hence, the theoretical dilemmas discussed in this paper can be understood as communication problems. Lack of communication with women of other racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds led white middle class feminists to commit essentializing mistakes. Similarly, the assertion that the subaltern cannot speak might be translated as "the subaltern cannot communicate." In fact, this very argument was advanced by Jürgen Habermas in his notion of communicative competence (Habermas, 1979). He maintains that those in control of the means of communication have the power to keep certain groups marginalized by not allowing them access to communication, and consequently preventing their participation in the public sphere and the public discourse. However, Chow (1993) suggests that members of subaltern groups might manage to communicate in ways that academics do not always recognize. She gives the example of mainland Chinese young singers whose music plays a critical function in regards to the dominant ideology. A similar argument could be made of rap music in the United States. The fact that these genres get co-opted to some extent by the dominant ideology only points to the constant negotiations identity and social position must undergo.

Under this framework, the task of academics is to develop more effective means of communication. While we should be conscious of the potential dangers of our speech, retrieving from the responsibility of speaking and letting our fear of criticism prevent us from engaging in coalition politics can be equally damaging. Speaking for others is always a risk—of which responsibility we cannot be absolved—yet a risk we must take (Elam, 1995). Or, as wise old French women would put it, "qui ne risque rien n'a rien."[2] Thus, to borrow Friedman's statement, "I cannot accept the notion that the racial privilege of my whiteness should enforce my silence about race and ethnicity, issues of vital ethical and political importance not only in the United States but also in the global context" (4). Besides, silence is an impossible theoretical position for a communication scholar. Communication scholarship is based on the very assumption that speaking for, with, and about others is not only possible, but useful. Accepting the notion that we can only speak for ourselves or within a very limited social community would send communication scholars to the unemployment line.

We need, however, to keep on developing a more theoretically sophisticated understanding of the significance for our research of the fact that we all embody multiple selves and multiple positions. Feminist standpoint theory has been one effort to do so. We need to remember that the kind of knowledge standpoint theorists talk about is not afforded to us by our biological makeup and is not readily available to us. The work of black male feminist scholar Michael Awkward (1995) is particularly useful in pointing out how simplistic interpretations of standpoint theory can lead to such biologically determinist arguments. He notes an ambivalence in feminist reactions to his work ranging from a disbelief that he could be "so feminist" to an unease with his "male readings" of Afro-American women's texts (74). Thus, while it is crucial to remember that knowledge is situated, it is also crucial to remember that situation bears on meaning, but does not determine it (Alcoff, 1995). In a word, identity needs to be denaturalized. It may be, as Caplan (1988) suggests, difficult for those in a dominant position to come to see themselves as gendered or racial subjects—since they are not forced to do so by the dominant order—but it is not impossible.

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[2] Those who do not risk anything do not get anything.

One way to address the complexity of social position is to always ground our work in its proper cultural and historical context, or, as Carol Stack (1996) puts it, "acknowledge that how we position ourselves in our research and writing must be finely tuned with respect to the times, the region, the setting, and race/gender politics of the historical moment" (99). Such an effort to contextualize, has been a central component of critical communication research from the Frankfurt School to cultural studies. As Hardt (1993) reminds us, "The independence of the individual from the totality is . . . an illusion. It must be replaced by understanding the self in relationship with others, and by insisting on the complementarity of such concepts as individuals and society. Individuals must be located in the space and time of society, and this location shapes individual consciousness" (60).

Importantly, critical communication theory also helps remind us that speech does not only happen at the academic level, and helps bring the debate over the significance of social position back to the larger realm of everyday social interaction. Communication both contributes and offers a solution to the difficulties of creating coalition across the boundaries of multiple communities. While on one hand the media create a social environment which promotes alienation from ourselves and each other, communication is also the only way we have to attempt to enter into the attitudes of others more fully (Mead, 1964).

The political effectiveness of feminism and other emancipatory movements rests on our ability to increase our communicative competence. Doing so might entail acquainting ourselves with modes of communication outside the familiar realm of Western academic discourse. While theoretical exploration is necessary and useful, the use of esoteric jargon makes it difficult for those outside academia—particularly those individuals who, due to their class position, are forbidden access to formal education—to develop adequate communication competence to enter the debate. Like the Chinese musicians Chow describes, we need to find multiple means to generate communication. Or, as Rosi Braidotti puts it, "Feminists need to become fluent in a variety of styles and disciplinary angles and in many different dialects, jargons, languages" (cited in Haase-Dubosc, 1995, 238).

Attempting to more fully communicate would require us to start concentrating on speaking *to* and *with* others rather than speaking *for* them. Instead of forcing us to choose between an all-encompassing sisterhood or extreme disconnection, speaking *with* others might help us recognize how we may be useful to each other (Haase-Dubosc, 1995; Kaplan, 1994). It might help us reclaim the concept of solidarity, which Raymond Williams (1958) argues "is the only conceivable element of stabilization in so difficult an organization" but which "will have to be continually redefined" (333). Redefining solidarity would necessarily entail struggling with the difficulty of achieving diversity without creating separation and avoiding looking at others "in such a way as to get back a positive image of oneself, to see oneself and one's undertakings as legitimate after all" (Haase-Dubosc, 241).

Radical feminist Marilyn Frye (1983) suggests that we can—and must—continually strive to learn from each other. Doing so is our only chance to create the kind of alliances, or communities, needed for effective political action. As she puts it, "Meaning is indeed something that arises among two or more individuals and requires some degree of agreement in perception and values. . . . The community required for meaning, however, is precisely *not* a homogeneous herd, for without difference, there is no meaning" (81, emphasis in the text). The community Frye writes about here is similar in many respects to that described by critical communication theorists, a community which they argued could only be achieved through communication (Hardt, 1992).

Harding (1990) suggests that feminists in many ways stand with one foot in modernity and the other in the "lands beyond" (100). I believe this is where we should attempt to stay, even though it may seem a theoretically uncomfortable position. Doing so would not only contribute to women's emancipation, but would help create the kind of ideal community described by critical communication scholars. As Williams reminds us,

> A good community, a living culture, will . . . not only make room for but actively encourage all and any who can contribute to the advance in consciousness which is the common good. Wherever we have started from, we need to listen to others who have started from a different position. We need to consider every attachment, every value, with our whole attention; for we do not know the future, we can never be certain of what may enrich it; we can only, now, listen to and consider whatever may be offered and take up what we can (335).

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MEMORY AND RECORD: EVOCATIONS OF THE PAST IN NEWSPAPERS

Stephanie Craft

Stanford University
Department of Communication
Building 120, McClatchy Hall
Stanford, CA 94305-2050
(650) 725-2239
slcraft@leland.stanford.edu

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Memory and Record: Evocations of the past in newspapers

Abstract

This paper explores how history is evoked and invoked in journalistic writing, and the implications of different conceptualizations of "history" for the study of collective memory and news. The paper examines how other scholars have traced the contours of history and memory and attempts to find a space for journalism within that discussion. Second, this paper offers a preliminary attempt to apply those concepts to news stories and identify questions for further examination.

Memory and Record: Evocations of the past in newspapers

"Journalism is a collective arrest of experience ... [it] converts valued experience into memory and record so it will not perish."
—James Carey, *Communication as Culture*

Newspaper journalists do not, generally, shy away from the assertion that what they do, day in and day out, is something akin to the work of historians. They cover "historic" events, self-consciously labeling them as such; they remind us of anniversaries of those events. In part, journalists employ this approach as a way to justify (and market) the news. If a peace treaty is "historic," no one questions the space it takes up on Page One.

But journalists' interest in history runs both deeper and wider than merely making historic "hay" out of certain events – deeper in its assumptions about the nature of history and wider in its consideration of what constitutes it. Journalists seem to be guided by a particular notion of history, one that regards history as simultaneously nostalgic and objective. History means hard evidence and self-evident chronology, yet fond memory and yearning for the past as well.

Carey acknowledges journalism's dual inclinations toward preserving memory and record – and by listing both memory and record, acknowledges that they are two different things – but does not address how journalists approach the past to be remembered and recorded. How history is evoked in journalistic writing provides an entrée to understanding the reconstitution of the past within the present that Maurice Halbwachs and others have argued is the primary activity of collective memory.[1] As Zelizer (1995), echoing

Halbwachs, says, "Collective memory thrives on remaking the residue of past decades into material with contemporary resonance" (p. 217).. Collective memory can be seen as a process by which people construct the past, recovering certain events as emblems of shared experiences and values, for present purposes. Clearly, then, understanding how one important participant, the press, treats the past will help us to understand how a community's collective memory forms.

Journalism's working definition of history and what it may suggest for the study of collective memory and the news is the subject of this exploratory paper. To what extent does journalism exist in a gray area between memory and record, employing what it considers to be the "scientific" tools of historiography to uncover the past and regarding its discoveries with a warm, uncritical gaze? What kinds of questions does journalism's peculiar brand of historical consciousness raise?

First, this paper will examine how other writers have traced the contours of history and memory and attempt to find a space for journalism within that discussion. Second, this paper offers a very preliminary look at some newspaper writing to discover the kinds of questions that may be worthy of further examination and discussion.

I

Conceptualizing history and memory

Frisch (1986), making an argument for the study of "historical memory," points out a "linguistic curiosity" that helps demarcate the gray area between history and memory: While the noun "memory" has a verb, "remember," that readily corresponds to it, the noun "history" does not. Because memory presumes the active verb, to remember, "[i]nvolved as well, by definition, is the leap across time from the then of happening to the now of recall" (Frisch, 1986, p. 12).

But history and memory share an important trait: Both have one foot in the past and one in the present, with each foot determining where the other is planted. Thus, as Nerone (1989) points out, one's present perspective determines what in the past is remembered, how it is remembered, and the importance one assigns to it. In this sense, the past that is written as history or remembered as lived experience is more a product of the social, cultural and political location of the person writing or remembering than the object that is written or remembered. As de Certeau (1988) has argued, "historiography stages the conditions of possibility of production, and it is itself the subject on which it endlessly writes" (p. 11).

> The historiographical institution is inscribed within a complex that permits only one kind of production for it and prohibits others. Such is the double function of the place. It makes possible certain researches through the fact of common conjunctures and problematics. But it makes others impossible; it excludes from discourse what is its basis at a given moment; it plays the role of a censor with respect to current – social, economic, political – postulates of analysis. (de Certeau, 1988, p. 68)

Pointing out this similarity between collective memory and history, however, is not to say that the process or product they denote is the same, or even very similar. Halbwachs (1992, p. 40) offers a "presentist" approach, arguing that "in reality the past does not recur as such, that everything seems to indicate that the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present." As Zelizer (1995, p. 217) describes it, "the study of collective memory is a graphing of the past as it is used for present aims." History, however, is seen as an objective science in which stories are constructed based on evidence of and from the past. History refers to a practice, bound by professional standards, as well as a result. While history is often approached as, alternately, a process of debunking or filling out what is known about the past, collective memory is more a process of integration or application of the past to the present.

Zelizer (1995) argues that the study of collective memory is the study of sites rather than events, which are the typical focus of historical study. Collective memory is more mutable than history, a "history in motion, moving at a different pace and rate than traditional history" (p. 216). Becker (cited in Nerone, 1989) actually defines history *in terms of* memory – history is "the artificial extension of a social memory," an expanded and "corrected" version of collective memory (p. 98).

That collective memory and history are frequently defined in terms of each other offers a telling indication of how similar they are. But what can we say about the essence of collective memory on its own? Bodnar (1992) describes collective memory as an argument about the interpretation of reality "ultimately grounded in the inherent contradictions of a social system," such as local and national structures, and ethnic and national cultures whose "function is to mediate the competing restatements of reality these antinomies express" (p. 14).

> Public memory speaks primarily about the structure of power in society because that power is always in question in a world of polarities and contradictions and because cultural understanding is always grounded in the material structure of society itself. Memory adds perspective and authenticity to the views articulated in this exchange; defenders of official and vernacular interests are selectively retrieved from the past to perform similar functions in the present. (Bodnar, 1992, p. 15)

So collective memory is, in some sense, the product of group recovery and reconstruction; not just what happened in the past, or the aggregation of individual memories of the past, but how a group uses the past to make meaning in the present. This is not to say that for each individual in the group, the past is perceived in the same way. Rather, the collective memory transcends those individual memories.

The paths that collective memory and history each take to the past appear to overlap. Conceiving of the study of collective memory as the construction of the past by a group still points to traditionally historical inquiry: What are the characteristics of the group? How did it form? Why does a certain event resonate with this group and not other groups? Zelizer (1995) recognizes this overlap by noting the tension between the particular and the universal that is present in collective memory. In some instances, "events give memory a platter on which to serve historical accounting," Zelizer notes, while in others, the relationship is reversed (p. 231). That is, events can offer up a way of reinforcing collective consensus about the past, and memory can turn particular events into "generalizable markers" about universal and enduring concerns.

The actual past

Knapp (1989) problematizes the difference between history and memory by questioning whether the actual events of the past are even important, ethically or politically, compared with what is remembered about the past. He questions historians' "reconstructive impulse" that drives them to find out what *really* happened, to retrieve from the past that which had been repressed or hidden.

> The question that concerns me, then, is this: why should it ever matter, if it does, that an authoritative narrative correspond to historical actuality? What is the relation between a narrated act's paradigmatic authority and that act's actually having taken place at some specifiable moment, or any moment, in the past? (Knapp, 1989, p. 123)

To answer these questions, it is necessary to first examine how the past is used in the present. Knapp, adopting Halbwach's presentist approach, points out that a kind of tautology relates what we value in the past and what we value in the present: "[O]ur sense of what is symbolically useful in the past depends on our present sense of what matters" (p. 130). Therefore, what we select to remember from the past represents nothing more than our present values. The "actualness" of the past event appears to matter little, leading Knapp to question whether fiction or other sorts of narratives could simply be substituted for "actual" past events for symbolic use in the present.

As several scholars have argued, then, history as well as collective memory are constructed of narratives that correspond to values people hold in the present; narratives of events or memories that do not correspond are ignored or reconstructed to fill other symbolic roles. Taking this as a given, Knapp asks "whether the dependence of collective values on shared memories implies an equivalently strong relation to the actual (as opposed to imagined or mistakenly remembered) events of the collective past" (p. 141). If so, the extent to which our collective memories of the past are "correct" has important political implications. Also, to the extent that we choose our history, we raise ethical issues about our accountability for past actions. "[W]hat can it mean to deny that the past has ethical claims on the present?" Knapp asks.

Here, perhaps, is where a discussion of journalism's role in shaping collective memory is relevant. Most often, journalism's role seems to be reflecting changing conceptions of the past, filtered through the experiences and cultures of people in the present. That is, journalism does not perform a "filling out" role in regards to the past; it is better at performing the memory task than the record task Carey has assigned it. While the press dutifully reports on new historical findings or new evidence that alters perceptions of what "actually" happened in the past, it does not for the most part reflect a broader view or a more nuanced one. On a basic level, journalists are interested in the new angle, not a comprehensive picture.

In addition, the exclusion of marginalized, low status groups from the formation of collective memory makes journalism's role problematic. The collective memory reflected in journalistic accounts serves to further isolate and exclude them from power.

Homogenizing images of the past

Kaes (1990) takes Knapp's argument in a slightly different direction: Even if the actual past doesn't matter in the present, the authentic memory of that past does. Kaes worries that media images of history will become so integrated into the collective memory of that history that they will replace the memories of people who actually experienced and remember that history.

> [T]he past always has to be reconstructed and reconstituted, represented on the basis of representations that already exist. This, of course, is the aporia of historical representation in film: how to break out of the circular recycling of images that are mere replicas of previous images. Only if a spectator recognizes a film's images as historical ones, as images one has previously seen and knows, only then does the film qualify as a historical film. (Kaes, 1990, p. 117)

At one level, Kaes is questioning who the collective in "collective memory" is. The more homogenized memory becomes, the less likely that small or marginalized collectives will be able to maintain a sense of their unique, shared experiences. It would seem, according to Kaes, that American mass media can only work as a repository or reflector of national and not "local" collective memory.

Kaes offers three examples of films dealing with historical topics in which memory resists expropriation and homogenization: *Shoah*, *Hitler*, and *Die Patriotin*. The first, *Shoah*, employs oral history as a way of basing history on individual, personal memory; the second, *Hitler*, attempts to shed any narrative whatsoever by presenting history as a jumble of contradictory artifacts; and the third, *Die Patriotin*, acknowledges the "constructedness" of history by having all the action take place in the artificial confines of a studio. To the extent that Kaes sees these films as attempts to "defy the all-encompassing, homogenizing power of mass media and their control over public memory," he seems to be saying that public memory is (or can be) repressive, that it is not the populist product of people living together in a common culture in both space and time (p. 124). The implications for journalism of projects like *Shoah, Hitler,* and *Die Patriotin* seem to be that it must break away from recycled images of the past and attempt to include other images and stories.

Funkenstein's argument (1989) regarding the inescapable relationship between an individual's memory and the social context in which the individual and his memory are constituted, as well as the notion that memory derives from the present as much as the past, would seem to point in the same direction as Kaes's notion that individual memories are to some extent "received from" outside, mediated images of the past. Still, Funkenstein has not addressed media specifically, and considers collective memory to be "direct and unmediated" to the extent that an individual recalls events he has personally experienced.

He asserts that because remembering something is a mental act, it is necessarily personal. Even people who experience a common event do not have identical memories of it. However, personal memory is socially situated. Personal memories refer to social objects and events whose meanings are socially determined. Drawing from Hegel's concept of self-consciousness as something that "exists only when recognized," Funkenstein argues that personal memory requires a social context; it requires the collective memory for its own existence.

The relationship between personal and collective memory becomes clearer in the analogy Funkenstein draws with de Saussure's distinction between language and speech. Language is a system of symbols; speech is the act of using them. Hence, collective memory, like language, can be seen as "a system of clear signs, symbols, and practices: times of memory, names of places, monuments and victory arches, museums and texts ... " Personal memory, like speech, "is the realization of these symbols" (p. 7).

It may be useful to think of the location of collective memory as neither in the individual or the collective, but at their intersection. Or, another useful heuristic might be to think of collective memory as the social context in which individuals recognize their own, personal memories. Funkenstein, unlike Kaes, views historical memory as very different from what a collective remembers. Again, part of the difference lies in Halbwach's idea that collective memory derives from the present. Historical memory, in contrast, is distanced from the present; historians seek to ignore present meanings and avoid interpreting the past in terms of present concepts.

One could argue that Kaes conflates collective memory with the historical content of mass media, or that he is not clear enough in his distinction between history and collective memory. Yet his idea that our memories are increasingly not our own, or really anyone's "authentic" memory, is compelling. When does collective memory simply become synonymous with media representations of the past? Still, his argument begs the question of where collective memory is, if evidence of it cannot be found in film, and media accounts of memory are not to be trusted as authentic.

The newspaper as a site of memory

Pierre Nora (1989) argues "there are *lieux de memoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de memoire*, real environments of memory" (p. 7). Memory is merging into history, which itself is accelerating as our perceptions of history become more and more tied to current events. This "dilation" of historical perception, as Nora calls it, finds assistance in the media, the purveyors of those current events.

Sites of memory, then, are the result of the siege of "spontaneous memory," the kind of memory that exists separately from place or object. Sites are places where memory is turned into memorial; they are the physical representations of some remembered event, a "jealously protected enclave" of "privileged memory" set aside for commemoration in a society that otherwise might forget in its eagerness to get on with history. They are, in Nora's words, "moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded" (p. 12).

On a practical level, sites of memory are museums and archives and monuments and flags - symbolic objects. To the extent that newspapers, magazines and television programs also are symbolic objects, where might they fit into Nora's characterization of *lieux de memoire*? Are they "spontaneous memory" or "privileged memory" or a compromise between them? Or does the press more accurately fall under the rubric of history, that which sweeps memory away?

The notion of the press as a compromise is compelling. Like privileged memory, it takes on a physical form. Yet, more like spontaneous memory, it lacks the permanence of a monument. The press provides a forum for community memory, reproduced every day or hour or month, and in doing so seems to stand against the loss of memory to history. What may be more compelling, however, is the idea that the press is neither spontaneous nor privileged memory, but history.

Yet the press reflects the memories extant in a community in a more static than dynamic way. Press coverage seems to stem more from duty than feeling. It does not provide a "jealously protected enclave" as much as a roving spotlight, fixing its gaze on whatever has resonance at a particular moment. For example, some anniversaries and holidays are always covered in the press, some only occasionally or briefly covered, others not at all. Memory, or a modern conception of memory, on the other hand, is absorbed by collection, in creating "an unlimited repertoire of what might need to be recalled" (p. 13). There is no selection or priority, simply gathering - an approach that runs contrary to journalistic practices.

II

A preliminary search for evidence

As a way to begin applying these conceptualizations of history, memory and journalism, and identifying themes, issues and questions regarding them, stories that appeared in the "B" section of *The San Jose Mercury News* in a single month were collected and examined. The "B" section in most newspapers large enough to have multiple sections is generally reserved for news about the local communities in which the newspaper is published. Stories of national or international import, as well as local stories that are especially dramatic or have far-reaching consequences, make it into the "A", or main, section. The news that is important to the people who live in a community, but not generally to those who live outside of it, is found in the "B" section.

The B section in the *Mercury News* provides an interesting case study of how this categorization of news content plays a role in shaping community identity. The paper's multiple editions - some half dozen tailored to groups of communities in the circulation area - are perhaps most differentiated in the B section, where local stories are given varying levels of emphasis, or "play," according to their subjects' proximity to the targeted communities.[2]

Community identity, however, is only one product of local news coverage. Events of the community's past also preoccupy local news. The B section is a forum for memories of that past - the history of community identity, in some sense - characterized by a particular vision of what history is and how events are, or should be, remembered. The B section, then, plays a role in collective memory formation. To be sure, Kaes (1990) offers a persuasive argument that mass media homogenize collective memory, thereby making it more likely for collective memory to exist at a national rather than local level. For a preliminary case study of a single newspaper, however, it seemed most appropriate to concentrate on the section of the paper with news that is "closest" to its readers.

For each day's B section during January 1996, I scanned the stories and made the following judgments about subject matter and approach: Was the story premised on a past event or subject in any way that could be construed as celebratory or commemorative? Was its content tied, explicitly or implicitly, to the past and aimed at aiding or reinforcing memory of that past? A total of 24 stories appeared to meet those criteria.

This exploratory research suggests that a great deal of local news is not new at all, but, rather offers accounts of the past. In the set of examined stories, those accounts can be separated, roughly, into two groups: 1) anniversaries and commemorations of past events taking place in the present; and 2) subjects that are historical but not generally “pegged” to a current event. Taken together the categories offer interesting insight into which elements of the past are considered worthy of recognition, recovery and absorption into collective memory.

The significance of stories in the first group lies in which dates and events are considered worthy of anniversary coverage. History in this case is an event, and one that is easily pinned to a particular day, such as the birthday of a leader or a natural disaster. In the second group, history is conceptualized as existing in a chronology of the past, a collection of artifacts or documents, or a physical site. Notions of history and historiography appear somewhat muddled in this group.

For purposes of discussion, the first category will be labeled "commemorative" and the second, "historical." Before further detailing the commemorative or historical characteristics of the stories, however, I will take a brief look at what constitutes a "news peg."

The past as "peg"

Every reporter who writes a news story, and even those who write features, must answer the question, "Why am I writing this story today?" The answer to that question is the peg. Timeliness is one of the most common pegs – "I am writing this story about a three-alarm fire today, because it happened today." Stories also are pegged to upcoming events. For example, a story might preview a city council meeting. Frequently, however, it is the past that provides a peg. That the past is considered an acceptable peg for a "news" story is, in itself, an interesting bit of evidence. Newspapers, by definition, are concerned with what is new. The past is not. Or is it?

Implicit in many of the stories is a sense that some change has occurred that alters our notion of the past or that speaks to a present issue in a new way. For example, a story headlined "San Carlos downtown becoming more hip," tells us that "bit by bit, downtown San Carlos is changing, and many residents are wondering what the future will hold." (Jan. 9, p. 1B).[3] A Jan. 17 story, "Northridge quake aftermath still rocking Santa Monica," describes how "the city was virtually ignored in the days right after Jan. 17, 1994, as the media converged on the more visibly damaged valley 20 miles away" (Jan. 17, 3B).

In each case, the reporter creates a peg out of a contrast with the past or perceived movement away from the past. On a practical level, reference to the past is simply a handy way to create a peg and, therefore, justify a story. On another level, however, one could argue that such a reference privileges the past or, rather, a particular kind of past. The commemorative group of stories tends to follow standard conventions regarding what is "news" by developing a new, contemporary angle on the anniversary or event commemorated. Stories in the historical group rely more on nostalgia for justification, a reliance we will examine in greater depth.

To be sure, the commemorative and historical categories are not mutually exclusive; some stories could rightfully be placed in both. These general differences, however, help us to separate stories that seem to obey typical news conventions from those that more clearly serve the symbolic purposes of collective memory.

The San Carlos and Northridge stories illustrate the two categories. The Northridge story is clearly pegged to the anniversary of the earthquake and further justified as news in the new information it offers - namely, that Santa Monica suffered as much as Northridge, but did not receive comparable attention immediately after the earthquake. The San Carlos story, on the other hand, is not pegged to any particular date, but is partly justified as evidence of a recent trend in downtown's hipness. Clearly, however, the nostalgia for how San Carlos used to be is a not-so-subtle peg as well.

News as nostalgia

Nostalgia sets the tone from the first sentence of the San Carlos story: "As a young girl, Lois Schmidt often sat with her mother at Woolworth's lunch counter in San Carlos, sipping a malt and munching on an egg salad sandwich. She recently returned with her husband, daughter and granddaughter and discovered to her delight that little had changed, including the sandwiches."

Nostalgia also seems to be the only peg for three stories in the historical group. "DC-3 wings back in time: 1990s passengers experience air travel of a generation ago," describes "nostalgia tours" available on the old prop plane. Like the San Carlos and Northridge stories, this story relies on contrast with the present for its symbolic impact. Readers are told that the "dark-blue velvet seats, two to a side, provide legroom that today's travelers can only dream of," for example. The story "A buzz from the '60s: Slot cars are back - lighter, faster, costlier" (Jan. 2, p. 3B) describes the resuscitated sport of slot-car racing, noting, "If you were around in the late '60s or early '70s when slot-car racing had its first go-round, the buzz has a nostalgic sound." A story about a man who collects old gas pumps (Jan. 9,

p. 5B) tells readers the "collection recalls America's golden age of service stations."

To the extent that nostalgia, by definition, is a kind of preference for the past, the use of it as a peg suggests an urge to build community bonds by harkening back to a shared "golden age." Zelizer proposes that "our advancing proximity to the close of the millenium *(sic)*" has sparked popular culture to "look backward for its themes" (p. 216). But one could argue that such harkening back is more cyclical than millennialist. Journalists, like everyone else, fear getting old and that fear is manifested in their sentimental approach to the past, in their interest in slot cars and Woolworth's lunch counters and old gas pumps.

Of course, nostalgia and sentimentality are not neutral. As Kaes has argued, the images that dominate popular culture may "increasingly expropriate independent personal experience" (p.119) and that "the sheer mass of historical images transmitted by today's media weakens the link between public memory and personal experience" (p. 121). Kaes' particular interest is in how film images can begin to substitute for remembered images of lived experience. But his argument tells us something about the power of these slot car and gas pump stories to define what the golden age was. People who are not of the "baby boom" generation, for example, are treated to a daily diet of references to the Age of Aquarius and old television sitcoms that were not part of their own lived experience. At what point does the dominance of these images in the newspaper begin to enforce rather than reflect collective memory?

History as artifacts

The slot car, gas pump and DC-3 stories share another trait: They reflect a conceptualization of history as a collection of artifacts or documents. The story under the headline "Those old gas pumps tell a story" (Jan. 9, p. 5B) begins:

> The history of Antelope Valley is reflected in vintage hand-operated gasoline pumps that recall a time of sparkling stations, free road maps and uniformed attendants who jumped to clear your windshield or check the oil. Bill Waisma of Lancaster, who has been collecting gasoline pumps for three decades, is busy preserving this history.

In the DC-3 story, in a similar fashion, begins:

> The 19 passengers stepped out onto the tarmac and back into time. Parked in front of them was a vintage DC-3. The twin-engine prop plane shows barely a trace of its 51 years and 32,500 hours of operation. But this wasn't just a change to look at a piece of aviation history.

In both cases, the thing – the gas pump, the airplane – is referred to as history, or perhaps more accurately, as historical evidence of some sort. If not for the gas pump, the story implies, what would provide evidence of the era of "sparkling stations"?

Two stories detailing the sale of items from a defunct newspaper's archives turn newspaper clippings into "history." The first story, headlined "Last chance to save bit of history" (Jan. 7, p. 1B), is most direct: "[T]he history folded carefully into thousands of brown and gray envelopes will be given away to the public ... In the files is the combined history of several decades of modern times." So "history" again takes the form of some tangible artifact; it is located in things preserved from the past.

That a newspaper story would consider old newspaper stories to be history offers evidence that journalists view the product of their jobs in a particular, "historic" way. And the stories' sentimental tone illustrates the urge toward nostalgia in news. Such sentimentality might owe something to the fact that it is, after all, a newspaper that is in the news - journalists have an understandable interest in this past. But can the coverage of such stories be seen as a self-conscious or subconscious way of reinforcing the importance of the newspaper to a community's collective memory?

The newspaper archive coverage, as well as the other history-as-artifact stories, also demonstrate how journalists' particular understanding of the nature of history reflects their understanding of the nature of journalism - specifically, that both are concerned with gathering facts. Journalists, accustomed to thinking of facts in a largely unproblematic, concrete way, extend this view to history, taking an uncritical approach to the things that represent history.

Where this approach becomes confusing, however, is in its possible conflation of history and memory. That is, if history (like journalism) is based on factual evidence that can be considered in "objective" terms, how can it also require consideration of those "facts" in the nostalgic terms of memory? As the stories make clear, it is not enough that old gasoline pumps are good representatives of turn of the century aesthetics or that the DC-3 cut the time for coast-to-coast travel by more than half – they also must recall a "golden era" in driving or flying. At some point, the objective information the artifact offers about the past must give way to the subjective memory of what it was like to live in the days when the artifact was new.

Zelizer suggests that such confusion is the perhaps inescapable result of collective memory's "usability," its almost utilitarian function in a collective.

> For collective memory is always a means to something else. Rather than be taken at face value as a simple act of recall, collective memory is evaluated for the ways in which it helps us to make connections – to each other over time and space, and to ourselves. At the heart of memory's study, then is its usability, its invocation as a tool to defend different aims and agendas. (Zelizer, 1995, p. 226)

If this is the case, then journalism occupies an interesting position at the crossroads of history and memory where history is memory, or, rather, where history is made usable as memory. In the newspaper, history is history because it happened in the past and there is objective "evidence" of it. History is news to the extent that it furthers some present aim or resonates with some contemporary issue. In this way, journalism's interpretation of history largely defines its role in collective memory formation.

History as chronology

History finds its way into the newspaper, at least the *Mercury News*, in an explicit way, through regular features called "Out of the Past" and "Santa Cruz Historic Perspective." The choice of subject matter, though historical, relies on a contemporary news peg. For example, a postal rate increase provided the justification for a story about the first postmaster of San Jose, heavy rain was the basis for a look at the Christmas flood of 1955, and the hiring of a new city manager prompted a story about the first city manager.

Even though there is a contemporary reason for the stories, special logos accompany them, clearly identifying them as "history" and indicating their intended purpose: to highlight the historical background of current events. For the most past, the stories are simple chronologies that point to journalists' objective, unproblematic approach to history. The postal rate story, for example, simply begins in 1847, when San Jose first got regular mail service, and marks various events and rate increases up to 1971, when the U.S. Postal Service was established. Postal rate history in San Jose follows a straight line.

The history stories at first glance seem "anti-nostalgic" to the extent that readers are instructed to appreciate how much progress has been made since the historical event. For example, "The Christmas flood of '55: Gentle rain inundated Santa Cruz" (Jan. 17, p. 1B) begins: "We are fortunate so far that the 1995 storms are nowhere near the disastrous floods of 1982, or the flood of the century in 1955." Similarly, the city manager story (Jan. 3, p. 2B) states, "Regina Williams faces multiple challenges beginning her first year as San Jose's city manager. But they are nothing like those that loomed over Thomas H. Reed when he became the city's first manager, in 1916."

One could argue, however, that the comparison of past to present, even when the past event is a crisis like a flood, creates nostalgia among those who experienced the crisis and made it through. Weathering the crisis becomes a community bond. Nostalgia also might be said to describe the kind of city pride created by a story about how far the city manager's office has progressed.

Such simple recitations of historical narratives fit journalists' criteria for history, but Knapp has gone so far as to question whether the "actualness" of the narratives is of primary importance in the construction of collective memory: "Why should it ever matter, if it does, that an authoritative narrative correspond to historical actuality? What is the relation between a narrated act's paradigmatic authority and that act's actually having taken place at some specifiable moment, or *any* moment, in the past?" (p. 123).

What Knapp is suggesting – that the "actual" past may be irrelevant (ethically and politically) compared with the collective memory of that past – calls into question this apparent privileging, by journalists, of the actual past as a source of community identity as evidenced in the chronology stories.

History as places

Several stories in the "historical" category focus on historic sites and efforts to save or preserve them. Two examples from the group include "Volunteers honored for protecting lighthouse" (Jan. 9, p. 1B), which ran with a deck headline "Keeping history alive, alight"; and "Plan aims to restore Pogonip Clubhouse" (Jan. 10, p. 1B). These stories are largely unquestioning, tending to justify the preservation effort more than dissect it. But they also serve a larger purpose: Making a case for the preservation of "sites" of memory generally, and for the type of sites worthy of such special effort.

In much the same way that journalists' seem to conceptualize history as residing in artifacts, they locate history in sites. Of course, such a linkage is not very problematic when, in fact, the site is where a historic event took place - say, a battlefield. In many of the stories, however, the site is a location for more generalized memories. History and memory become blurred, as Pierre Nora as points out. Nora argues that as our perceptions of history become more and more tied to current events, history accelerates and takes over memory. News coverage of anniversaries also illustrates this trend, as the time between current event and historical event becomes shorter and shorter. The explosion of the Challenger space shuttle moves from current event to history deserving of anniversary coverage in just one year.

Nora's argument that the merging of history and memory necessitates the creation of sites of memory is mainly applied to sites, such as war memorials, that are constructed specifically for the purpose of preserving memory, not extant sites, such as a lighthouse, that become fixed points for memory. However, the press' role in transforming sites into sites of memory is worthy of examination, as it serves the same end: Making a space for collective memory.

Among the "site" stories, the lighthouse one is heavily symbolic, a fact that does not escape the volunteer leading the preservation effort. "Lighthouses symbolize so many things we strive for in our lives," the volunteer is quoted as saying. "Society, safety, stability. Just think of the metaphors they stand for." Much of the rest of the story deals with the difficult life lighthouse-keepers led. So, the history reference in the headline notwithstanding, the lighthouse becomes a site of memory for an earlier (better?) era in shipping and navigation.

Journalists also can construct sites of memory even when a permanent, physical site is not available. "Exhibit continues bomb victim's quest," (Jan. 11, p. 1B) describes the Children's Peace Statue Exhibit at the Children's Discovery Museum in San Jose. The top headline reads "Children hear cry of Hiroshima." To be sure, journalists didn't create the exhibit, and therefore didn't construct this site of memory out of whole cloth. But most art exhibits don't warrant the kind of coverage - a story and two pictures on the front of the B section - this exhibit garnered. Indeed, many exhibits don't get more than a calendar brief. This coverage, then, suggests another kind of contribution to collective memory the newspaper can make: pointing out some events for particular attention, distinguishing them as important aspects of collective identity.

Conclusion

The purpose of this exploratory case study of how history is conceptualized by journalists (as judged by the stories they write) was to begin to map out the place where history, memory and journalism might intersect. Even this cursory look at local news coverage suggests that there are many questions and issues to be addressed. Clearly, the "news" is preoccupied with the past. And, to the extent that the press plays a role in shaping collective memory, how it views the past warrants attention. If journalists' see history as unproblematic, self-evident and objective – mirroring, largely, how they see journalism – then the kinds of issues they can raise, the kinds of pasts they can see and help the collective to remember are limited.

The contradictory urges toward an objective view of history and nostalgia for the past suggest that the collective memory a newspaper helps to shape will be somewhat scattered and unpredictable. Of course this is true. What still must be discovered is the process through which collective memory forms and what the newspaper's role in its formation means, in terms of the newspaper's responsibility to the community.

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[1] Names for this concept vary: public memory, social memory, collective memory. For consistency, I have used "collective memory" throughout the paper.

[2] Definitions of "local" depend on the size of a community and the newspaper's circulation area. The Mercury News' daily circulation numbers nearly 300,000 readers in more than a dozen communities.

[3] Quoted material from stories is referenced in the text only. All stories are from January 1996 editions of *The San Jose Mercury News*. Citations are not included in the references.

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Interior Design Magazines as Neurotica

by

Kim Golombisky
graduate student
Department of Communication
University of South Florida
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RUNNING HEAD: Neurotica

Contact:
Kim Golombisky
Department of Communication, CIS 1040
University of South Florida
4202 E. Fowler Ave.
Tampa, FL 33620
813/974-2145, kgolombi@luna.cas.usf.edu

Interior Design Magazines as Neurotica

Kim Golombisky, doctoral student
Department of Communication, University of South Florida

ABSTRACT

Interior design magazines equate home with leisure, a fantasy for female readers with jobs and families. Women's magazines typically compel women to become neurotic about housekeeping and family. But decorating magazines represent neurotica, an erotic ideal of home wiped clean of the family who makes housework. However, this resistant version of home still encourages domesticity by erasing not only the family but also the reader's labor that keeps the home so attractive.

KEY WORDS: *feminism, home, ideology, magazines*

Sunlight streams through a wall of windows draped with cheerful blue and yellow fabric. A thick floral rug frames the quilt-covered loveseat. Delicate bone china lines a bead-board corner hutch. Weathered bric-a-brac and whimsy compose still-lifes here and there among clouds of fresh flowers. Every pillow plumped, the rustic sun-room is pristine. There's no evidence of human occupation here except on the coffee table, next to a steaming cup of tea, someone's reading glasses sit on an open book. Today the magazine is *Country Living*.

I'm attracted to home interior design and decor magazines, but I've come to call their photographic logic *neurotica* -- a tactically appropriative term. At a time when U.S. working wives still do 70 percent of the housework (Rix, 1990), these magazines allow women to turn a system that exhorts them to be neurotic about housekeeping into an erotic ideal of the house that has been wiped clean of the family who makes housework.

Second wave feminism prompted scholarly interest in the gendered division of labor in this country. Socialist feminists, especially, exposed how women's domestic labor has supported the political economy since the industrial revolution. But in the academy, we struggle to operationalize housework, while mainstream social institutions ignore it altogether (Ferree, 1990; Levin, 1993). Meanwhile, despite their growing numbers in the workforce, employed wives and mothers continue to work a "second shift" at home (Hochschild, 1990), while a husband contributing to housework is doing his wife "a favor" (DeVault, 1990; Ferree, 1990). As an unofficial service industry, home-making remains women's invisible work.

At the same time, a number of highly visible discourses on the home target U.S. women. Historically, consumer culture and mass media have romanticized a middle-class ideal of home as woman's world. Women's magazines, particularly, trace more than a century of advice increasing women's responsibility for the scientific efficiency, physical health, and psychological welfare of the family (Doner, 1993; Ehrenreich & English, 1978; Miller, 1991). But during the same period, another less studied group of periodicals feminized the interior design industry and handed women additional responsibilities for producing artfully furnished houses (Gordon & McArthur, 1988; Jones, 1997; McNeil, 1994). Even though the discourses of both home *science* and home *aesthetics* compel women to identify with home-making, their two messages essentially compete toward opposite ends. Women's magazines suggest a home should be filled with happy family members. Interior design and decor magazines suggest that home is perfection when there are no people in the house.

In this essay I use Janice Radway's (1986) concept of "ideological seams" to frame this contradiction. Taking an unabashedly reflexive approach, I look at the ideological contradictions of reading home design magazines. First, I discuss some assumptions regarding the women who purchase these periodicals. Then I analyze these publications' photographic grammar. Finally, I scout for resistant uses and meanings. "My fieldwork has been on myself and on my friends and family" (Coward, 1985, pp. 14-15), all providing important moments of insight for me, as a white, middle-class, 38-year-old student/teacher and former advertising executive with a 16-year marriage, two children, a mortgaged subdivision house, and something of a crush on Martha Stewart.

Framework: Zigzagging Between Home-Making and Housekeeping

Somewhere between *home-making* and *housekeeping* lie what Janice Radway (1986) would call "ideological seams," where discourse and practice join imperfectly to persuade women toward contradictory desires: making a home for the family's comfort and keeping a house scrubbed free of evidence of the family's presence. For Radway, ideology is not a smooth, continuous fabric, but a dynamic "patchwork quilt" of "institutionalized but variable power relations, practices and activities" (p. 109). The significance of such a model calls our attention to junctions where pieces of the ideological worldview logically do not fit, but they become basted together anyway and naturalized through unexamined assumptions. Although we are bound up as objects of the ideological quilt, at the raggedy seams we create fancywork, zigzagging, and appliqué in an attempt to blend mismatched ideals. Radway's metaphor illustrates three important notions: 1) The seams make visible the fault-lines that construct our desires. 2) On the seams, we work out ingenious tactics for mending tears in the ideological reasoning our desires and their fulfillment depend on. 3) However ingenious, we can never make a perfect fit between either the seams or our desires.

Patriarchy is "riven by conflicts, slippages and imperfect joinings" (Radway, 1986, pp. 109-110). As an ideology, it binds women into a worldview where they can neither attain the self-determining power of male subjectivity nor become the ideal female object. Mass culture exacerbates this untenable situation for women by permeating everyday life with incomplete instructions on how to operate as independent feminine subjects. Encouraged to fill in the blanks, we never realize the whole enterprise is materially impossible within the very ideology which tells us that it is not only possible but should be our goal. Unraveling patriarchy then means locating the places where we struggle to reconcile what we've learned we should be with what we can be, given our circumstances.

Radway takes seriously her romance novel readers' "claim that they read simply to escape" from the constant demands of household life. For Radway, this desire to escape marks the tension of an ideological seam which romance novel reading addresses. "By placing the barrier of the book between themselves and their families, they secure a certain measure of privacy and personal space." So romance novel reading is fancywork -- creative resistance that temporarily transcends readers' dissatisfaction with the contrast between the ideal of household life and its everyday realities. But romance novel reading is fraught with the very contradictions it is meant to address, according to Radway. Relief lasts only through the novel's last page; the novels themselves fuel a desire for symmetrical gender relations unachievable in patriarchy; and readers seem to choose this tactic of reading over others because it simultaneously frees them from the constraints of the domestic routine while fitting perfectly within them.

At first glance, design and decor magazines operate very much like the barrier between themselves and household life that Radway's romance novel readers describe. These periodicals provide fantasy space which fits well within the household routine. Their content is full of the contradictions women want to escape. The relief they provide is temporary, and their content always redirects readers back home again. As critics, we can read these images as full of advice on how to achieve the perfect house which perpetuates women's role as home-makers.

But such an analysis doesn't account for the reader. Radway predicts a "womanly subtext," where readers address their own interests; women may read these magazines "against the grain" by resisting "dominant practices of patriarchal signification" (p. 98). Perhaps for readers the allure of gazing at beautiful rooms is that these photographed places freeze moments in time when the home environment is completely controlled. As such, they offer readers a fantasy power trip. Once made perfect, an *unoccupied* room does what it's told, stays put, does not require constant keeping. Designed magazine rooms are void of the family's everyday living that disrupts the ideal of a perfect house, and so these pictures appear to be submissive to the home-maker's will. In magazine rooms, readers take symbolic control of the home.

Because these kinds of zigzagging practices point to innate flaws in patriarchy's ideo-logic as well as a kind of nascent feminist subversiveness, they are places ripe for intervention, Radway says. For feminist scholarship, the project then becomes prying open the ideological seams, challenging them, and looking for opportunities for change. Persistent intervention at the practical level of the mundane and interpersonal is a crucial move toward the political. Everyday, easily overlooked, unglamorous practices have the most significance for gender. "We must wonder what power a politics of excluding the everyday and 'the personal' would have in accounting for women's oppression," Kathleen Kirby (1996) asks in her analysis of women's spatial subjectivity. Radway herself is compelled to argue for the significance of so-called women's media and media habits because they so often are denigrated as trivial or irrelevant. But the subtle, hardly noticed ways we are offered and take up our own genders ought to be the first seams we unravel.

While Radway's ethnographic work seeks to understand others, I struggle to understand the implications of my own zigzagging work when I stare longingly at beautiful photographs of tasteful rooms. And while Radway explicates romance novel readers' talk about reading, I explicate the photographic texts of the home design and decor magazines I find so appealing.

The Reader: Buying into Home-Making

For readers, the act of purchasing home interior design and decoration magazines means they've already bought their roles as home-makers, the people most responsible for the house's interior. These magazines do not convince a woman to take charge of home-making; they only reinforce what she already believes: The house is her sphere of influence.

At the grocery store, I randomly picked up 14 fall 1996 issues of these magazines to compare their content: *American Homestyle & Gardening*, *Architectural Digest*, *Colonial Homes*, *Country Home*, *Country Living*, *House Beautiful*, *House & Garden*, *Southern Accents*, *Today's Homeowner*, *Traditional Home*, *Veranda*, *Victoria*, *Victorian Home* -- and, just for fun, a *Better Homes & Gardens*. These titles represent 17 million paid copies for their combined September 1996 issues, according to *Standard Rate and Data Service* (1996). Pulling out a table from my media planning days, I calculated that figure to a rough net reach of 9 million readers looking at the same magazines as I was. By either estimate, that is a significant market for publishers and advertisers selling everything from the idea of what a furnished house should look like to the products with which to achieve that look. Particular publishers position themselves in terms of class, taste, historical period, geography, and decorating skill. But their content is always the same: lots of 4-color pictures of beautiful, unoccupied rooms. For all their apparent niche markets, these magazines are really more alike than different. They address women in their private domiciles with examples of how to design beautiful rooms.

Simmons Market Research and Mediamark Research are helpful for constructing a rather loose composite of this home interior design magazine reader. She is overwhelmingly a white, married, 30- to 40-something woman. She is likely to have some children and some college education. She tends to be employed outside the home, although she earns less than half of her household's annual income of roughly $50,000. In fact, she tends to earn less than half of what her husband earns. She is a single-family-unit home owner and the female head-of-household. Predictably, her consumption of these magazines increases somewhat the first year she lives in a new house which needs to be made into a home. (Mediamark, 1989a, 1989b; Simmons, 1990a, 1990b)

Perhaps here I should clarify some terms. A household includes the family and its belongings. The home-maker is the female head-of-household who has assumed full-time responsibility for making the private material structure called a house into the physically and emotionally comforting affective environment called a home. Even though she has a public career, the home-maker is still responsible for home-making, as well as housekeeping, although she may insist on help with the housework.

This contemporary home-maker has the idea she works for herself (and thus the rewards of her labor are her own) in her own home. She believes that in the house there is no authority higher than hers. The idea of home-making, assuming responsibility for the house, in her mind means taking charge, which is a different proposition altogether than being assigned responsibility for a chore (as she well knows because she is the person who usually assigns household chores). Having power over the poetic abstract noun *home* implies oh-so-much more than the concrete noun *house*. Home-making points to creating something of value that lasts and offers rewards. Housework is tantamount to slavery, but home-making "provides the opportunity for endless creative and leisure pursuits" (Oakley, 1974, p. 41).

But the distinction between home-making and housekeeping is merely rhetorical. Twenty years ago, Ann Oakley's (1974) stay-at-home housewives said they disliked the monotony of housework, but they liked the autonomy of being their own bosses. On the one hand, to be a home-maker implies mastery of a private world. On the other hand, this mastery depends on the home-maker's labor, not leisure, and the source of her labor is the household. Reframing housekeeping as home-making does not change its material circumstances: Women continue to have the most responsibility for the interior of the house, which by virtue of always being open for business, is a full-time job, whether or not these home-makers moonlight at careers.

Similarly, defining married female heads-of-households as home owners is a misnomer. Rarely will a house belong to a woman based on her individual earning power. Most women cannot afford to buy a house independently because women's wages across the board are substantially less than men's (Blum et al, 1993; Rix, 1990). For women, home ownership usually depends on marriage, or at least a committed partner.

So defining home interior design and decor magazine readers, who are working wives earning less than half of their household incomes, as home-owning home-makers constitutes an ideological seam. The questionable difference between being a home-maker and a housekeeper, and the unquestioned difference between being a home owner and the wife of one, makes for a raggedy tear in logic that home interior design and decor magazines, and their readers, zigzag across.

Unlike the decorating magazines, "The Seven Sisters" (*Better Homes & Gardens*, *Family Circle*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Woman's Day*, *McCall's*, and *Redbook)* offer women a 150-plus-year tradition of housekeeping advice on wifery, mothering, cooking, dirt-and-germ warfare, and social etiquette. Their helpful hints explicitly remind readers that they serve the family. But the equally long U.S. tradition of home interior design and decor magazines focuses specifically on the material house, its aesthetic atmosphere, and its artful furnishing, to the exclusion of everything else distinguishing a house from a home. People, relationships, housework, and labor itself all literally disappear from the picture in these magazines. They wipe out everything "The Seven Sisters" harp at home-makers about. Instead, the creative work of home-making -- making a beautiful, inviting place of their houses -- magically appears, even though they don't live there by themselves and couldn't afford to anyway. The seam, of course, is that the house always leads back to housekeeping. The reader buys the ideal of making empty, perfect rooms, but forgets the work (let alone the budget) it takes to create and maintain them, especially when she is sharing those rooms with the family. Home interior design and decor magazines obfuscate home and house and women's relationships to both.

The September 1996 issue of *Today's Homeowner* was its premier. "Welcome Home" Editor in Chief Paul Spring wrote: "As all of you regular readers of *Home Mechanix* know, we spent the summer remodeling -- *Today's Homeowner* is the result." The new *Today's Homeowner* was now clearly trying to capture the female reader its formerly male title *Home Mechanix* did not. Spring admitted the redesigned magazine wanted to attract the more feminine "home-owning" and "homeowners," which meant dumping the masculine "hobbyist." "We've even hung those useless little towels in the guest bath," Spring wrote.

The Photographs: Fantasizing Perfect Rooms

The rooms in home interior design and decor magazines invite us to stand in their doorways to chart our longings onto their photographic landscapes. They "hail" (Althusser, 1971) us readers with their absences. Here, yes, is a territory that remains in submission to the home-maker's will. Ah, how well all rude signs of budget limitations and housework have been erased. At last, there are no bodies disturbing the peace. The camera has captured the perfectly made home.

For the home-maker, this is an irresistible fantasy because the object of desire, perfect rooms, mirrors an illusion of her more powerful self. How silently drives the engine of its contradictions. We can never achieve this standard we measure ourselves against. We visualize making the perfect home for ourselves and our families. But perfect rooms, standing in for the perfect home, do not accommodate the household's people. Here I want to explain the photographic grammar of home magazines, suggest why women find this grammar so appealing, and unravel the ideological seams both magazine and reader must manage in this relationship.

Photos of perfect, unoccupied rooms do welcome readers with a particular protocol. These pictures always point to their own "hollow for the missing person," defined by "crowds of signifiers," where the reader's body is meant to be (Williamson, 1978, p. 79). Judith Williamson (1978) describes the reader's identification with the "absent person" in this kind of print media image: "The perspective of the picture places us in a spatial relationship to it that suggests a *common* spatiality (as in all 'classical' art); everything is proportioned to the gaze of the observer -- *us*, the absent person 'meant' by the picture" (p. 78). Home design and decor magazine photos hail us with an enhanced estimation of our missing but clearly indicated selves marked on the picture. A draped afghan and an open book on the couch say, "You, come sit by this roaring fire -- You deserve to relax here." They say, "This is you." For a minute or two, this is your home.

"Surely this is the room where I would stay," wrote Janna Jones (1997), looking at an *Architectural Digest*. "The white mosquito netting flutters slightly as a cool breeze drifts through the French door. Exhausted from the Caribbean sun, I crawl under crisp cool sheets and take a nap until I am summoned for dinner. ... I have gained passage to ... fantasy island ... by means of these images."

The *I* who gains passage into leisure time and space is the reader who inserts herself to become the "leading actor" in a narrative (Williamson, 1978). And by becoming subjects of this photographic narrative, women readers become its ideological objects, target-marketed character actors directed to re-enact a symbolic-symbiotic relationship to the home's house and its rooms. This is a fantasy of controlling the home environment for the home-maker's pleasure. But imagining power to control the house perpetuates her relationship to the housework, hidden from these pictures, that she'll need to do to fulfill her fantasy. In the throes of this magazine fantasy, we forget to ask who will cook and summon us to dinner as we nap on those freshly laundered sheets in that cleaned and tastefully appointed Caribbean room. While the home-maker's implied absence is the necessary formula in the story, her own labor-intensive attachment to the house, as well as her family, must be written completely out of the script. This fantasy is a "regime of imagery" that "represses any idea of *domestic* labor" (Coward, 1985, p. 66).

The absence of reality in these magazine rooms is precisely the grammar that makes them work as possibilities in our fantasies. Their purported seriousness as actual locations makes them all the more plausible. If in addition to the cutout hollow for our absent selves, these rooms implied cutout hollows for reality as we know it, we would have one of Williamson's jokes (1978): An overt contradiction between the ordinary and the extraordinary becomes a preposterous lampoon. Imagine there also on the photograph is the dotted coupon line marking the spot where the rug really lies out of alignment after the galloping dog rides it across the floor, and there is the cutout of the children beating each other with juice-stained sofa cushions, and there is the partner, feet propped on the coffee table, surfing with the remote. And finally, there is the real cutout for you, in your scruffy sweatpants, not reading peacefully by the fire, but folding the family's laundry in front of the TV. A picture of that would make us laugh. The absurdity of banal reality overlaid on the poetic imagination crushes the fantasy of perfect rooms.

Erasing the budget, clock, household, and chores from the picture makes a much more satisfying home-making fantasy, reflecting our real underlying desire for some control over our responsibility for the house as well as a space in it where we, too, can relax from labor. Magazine photos of beautiful rooms hail us as women of leisure. But maintaining standards of tidy and stylish that look effortless but still welcome and comfort human occupants, leaves little time for home-makers themselves to "put up their feet," according to Ruth Madigan and Moira Munro's (1996) contemporary home-making respondents. Madigan and Munro uncover a cycle of competing tensions between the women's work of home fashion and housework. Home furnishings should produce a stage set that visually welcomes human occupation; housekeeping should ensure that the set is not disturbed by human occupation. The beautiful-room fantasy exists in reality only in the transitional period after the stage has been set and before we walk on.

Of course home-makers find home design and decor magazines' photographic grammar seductive. "Everything shown is at an ideal moment" (Coward, 1985, p. 65). Such photos prolong the all-too-fleeting time after housework when she has asserted some control over her house's rooms. Theoretically, gazing longingly at magazine pictures of the house that erase housework positions the looking reader in exactly the fantasy she desires: as a landlord surveying her property. According to Gillian Rose (1993), the Western aesthetic "landscape" projects a patrician visual ideology which conflates having the power to look at a place with mastering it. A manicured landscape, as that which lies within a viewer's field of vision, symbolizes environmental control. The gaze itself, the ability visually to organize and dominate the landscape, corresponds to a class-conscious assumption of superiority. Vistas swept into the landscape gaze imply the viewer has a privileged power over the scene. "The landscape gaze" is a "sophisticated ideological device that enacts systematic erasures," Rose writes (1993, p. 87). In human-engineered environments, the grammar of the aesthetic landscape tends to erase the work and worker who labor to make the place so pleasant to look at.

But Rose argues we overlook the gendering of this visual domination. "The active look is constituted as masculine, and to be looked at is the feminine position" (p. 104). Western culture feminizes both nature and landscape by conceptualizing them as bodies to be explored and subdued. Rose's landscape gaze (grandfather of the cinematic gaze) is powerful and active. This masculine survey subordinates the feminine landscape, which is constructed as passive and submissive while nurturing and sustaining.

Building on feminist psychoanalytic theory and Laura Mulvey's (1989) "scopophilia" (visual pleasure), Rose problematizes the contradictory pleasures of the landscape gaze, which she calls an "erotics of knowledge." The gaze, a white heterosexual male visual perspective, unstably oscillates between voyeurism and narcissism, and so it erases itself. "The gaze is then always torn between two conflicting impulses: on the one hand, a narcissistic identification with what it sees and through which it constitutes its identity; and on the other a voyeuristic distance from what is seen as Other to it" (Rose, 1993, p. 103). The landlord holds title over his landscaped property only as long as he continues to be connected to it. But as long as his identity depends on his property, he can never be autonomous from it. The landscape gaze both interpellates itself through the feminine landscape and distances itself from it (Rose, 1993).

Turning a site such as the house into a landscape for the female home-maker to gaze upon constitutes an ideological seam and further complicates the possibilities for her subjecthood. The home as privatized domestic space already has been feminized once as woman's domain. But as a landscape it is feminized a second time as a body whose interior contours are subdued and controlled for physical as well as visual pleasure. Appropriating the male landscape gaze with which to turn the house into an aesthetic object of desire makes invisible both the home-maker as the house's laborer and the family as her source of labor. This is knowledge she needs to confront in order to understand her dissatisfaction with her relationship to both. The home-maker's gaze upon landscaped rooms, both corporeal and photographic, seems to position her as both active master and passive servant to them. Such a gaze seems to give her the voyeur's power of separation from and control over the house while at the same time giving her identity a narcissistic connection to it. Here the voyeur's power is an illusion supported only by the absence of her own labor, and the narcissist's pleasure of identification undermines her efforts toward an identity other than housekeeper. She is locked into the self-annihilating oscillations of this narrative cycle between master and laborer.

What's more, the home-maker herself represents the feminine projecting her longing onto the feminized house. Kathleen Kirby (1996, p. 100) makes clear why women's relationships with feminized space are problematic: "'Man' becomes self by extricating himself from both woman and space, metaphysically and metapsychologically." But women can't objectify space because, in the phallogocentric symbolic order, women "blend" into space. Women and space occupy the same subordinate position. "Between the alienation we (women) confront in material and metaphysical space and our intimacy with it, a wavering, a distortion, or an inversion occurs" (Kirby, 1996, p. 100).

The home-maker's symbolic absence in home interior design and decor magazine pictures erases her laboring relationship to the house. But if her presence is signified by an open book and a steaming cup of tea, her narrative role is not scripted as master. Her gender, by definition, requires her presence as adornment, another pleasant bit of furniture to look at. Nevertheless, whether or not she reads herself as landlord or lady of leisure, her fantasy perpetuates her need for fantasy because the reality she faces in her day-to-day relationship to the house becomes highly dissatisfactory against either ideal (Radway, 1986).

Hoping to reconstruct the human relationship with landscape, Rose hints that women, already having learned to do domestic spaces, might also already have a solution: remap spaces as mutually nurturing human and environmental networks instead of domineering lines of objectifying sight. Such a perspective seems reasonable, especially in the context of the family home. But Rose falls prey to the same romanticism she condemns by assuming that nurturing, naturally, is what home-makers facilitate -- a conclusion that once again makes women responsible for home-making. Furthermore, for women, the home environment is a field of labor not sustenance. Refocusing on seeing the household as a series of intimate human relationships rather than as a house to be controlled in a battle of agency over environment offers an optimistic alternative. However, until women take a domestic role other than home-maker, changing their visual orientation to the house's landscape will not change their material relationship to its work. Theoretically or psychologically changing a woman's relationship with feminized space, especially in the home, does not "magically represent an intervention in social constructions of the real" (Kirby, 1996, p. 117).

Resistance: Home-Making to Erase the Household

U.S. consumer marketing asks women to become neurotic about controlling housework and the home's aesthetic landscape. But women turn this ideology into a nearly erotic attraction to houses emptied of the people who make housework: Neurotica. interior home design and decor magazines provide readers with a kind of ladies' home neurotica. The obvious fancywork is a perpetual cycle of housekeeping for women who struggle to erase evidence of the home's people in the house's rooms. But Janice Radway (1986) suggests there may be a more subtle kind of appliqué at work here -- a therapeutic "womanly subtext" reading "against the grain." Resistant practices that symbolically erase the ideological irritant represent feminist opportunity, even if women haven't fully articulated or understood their own resistance, and even if the resistance serves to perpetuate their own conflicting positions.

If a home-maker is always on duty when she is in the house, then stealing some household time to get pleasure from looking at magazine pictures is itself a subversive activity. Magazine reading when the family isn't home makes for even better pleasure. Using the precious little time when the house is empty for personal leisure is a subversive act because the most efficient housework gets done when the house is empty of children and husbands. Because the house is rarely empty of other family members when the home-maker herself is home, empty-house time for leisure or work is rare. The growing number of my friends who base their career offices at home say leisure time in the house becomes even more scarce because household housework and career homework compete for the home-maker/home-worker's time. So reading magazines of any sort for home-makers is a sinful pleasure that wastes empty-house. Like all sinful pleasures, there is a certain amount of guilt involved. Even when she's not alone in the house, her magazine reading is a selfish treat. For a brief time she simply refuses to share herself with others or the work others make (Radway, 1986).

Choosing to read home interior design and decor magazines instead of "The Seven Sisters'" *Good Housekeeping* genre represents another form of resistance. Interior design magazines further erase the household by providing a fantasy of empty beautiful rooms instead of good housekeeping advice on removing stains, preparing holiday Jello molds, or dealing with teenage mood swings. The decorating fantasy of creating a personalized environment for yourself is a more satisfying project than getting advice on cleaning, cooking, or playing household referee. "The Seven Sisters" always explicitly remind readers that they are at the mercy of others living in the house. The home-making design and decor magazines fantasize complete control of the house emptied of other people.

Similarly, there is an element of self-validation in home design magazine reading. If her house is fashionable, at least at its ideal moments, then by default, so is she. What's more, by dressing the house for herself, she can enjoying looking at -- actually see -- a symbolic version of herself. This self-validation has nothing to do with her household people or cleaning skills; they are erased in favor of her personal identity expressed through decoration. She may be no good at housekeeping, mothering, or wifing, but darn it, she has style. Decorating the house does offer tremendous opportunity for creative expression, even if you're picking up second-hand pieces at yard-sales.

Finally, even though the house may be cramped with too much furniture and decorated to near gaudy, or even though her economic situation may waver on the brink of financial disaster, home design and decor magazines can still offer the home-maker ideas to own as a commodity. If she can't consume material house-furnishing *artifacts*, then she can consume house-furnishing *ideas*. She can buy them and own them through these magazines, and she can hoard them up like collectibles or trade them with her friends.

The tension between home-making and housekeeping hinges on the family. Sinful pleasure in stealing time or empty house, the fantasy of perfect, empty rooms that make housework invisible, validation of self as designer rather than house-worker, and buying decorating ideas as commodities all erase the home's other people from the material house. These interpretations of reading home design and decor magazines subvert and resist the home-maker's other housekeeping responsibilities and offer therapeutic escape from the reality of home-making as unending servitude to the household. At the same time, by virtue of their relationship to the house itself as well as to the home-maker, these magazines and the home-maker's zigzagging practices perpetuate the house as woman's world, the place she is best suited to explore and invent her identity.

Having located this subversive reading, the next step is to replace the home-maker's worldview of her household responsibilities with a more conscious and empowered set of practices and discourses that disrupt her identification with the home, relieve her of her primary responsibility to the house, and extend her sovereignty beyond the private sphere.

If reading these magazines symbolically erases the family's presence as an irritant to the fantasy of perfect, empty rooms, then how women deal with their families' presence inside their corporeal homes becomes the next important ideological seam to explore. If perfect, empty rooms do not accommodate the family, if the two concepts themselves, family and beautiful house, are mutually exclusive as women's culture currently constructs them, then which one wins the home-maker's attention becomes an important question.

I realize now why rooms that look lived in make me vaguely anxious: they hail me, the household wife and mother, as head housekeeper.

Intervention: Prying out the Housework in Home-Making

The group of practices associated with interior design and decor magazines seems to be about erasures. Publishers systematically erase their female readers' labor intensive relationship with the home. Readers who buy into these magazines' ideal versions of home erase the difference between a beautiful house as museum of personal identity and a home where families impinge on the material world with their bodies. Publishers and readers seem to ignore the difference between a house and a home while perpetuating both as woman's sphere.

Still, Radway's (1986) prediction holds that subordinate groups may cultivate resistant, even subversive, practices that undermine dominant ideologies. At least the theory holds in the case of my community of women. While I make no claims beyond my own experience, I find an astonishing consistency in my friends' and neighbors' awareness that the ideal house is a practical impossibility but still a delightful fantasy. However, this *neurotica* has less to do with serving the family by crafting a better home, than with carving out a controlled metaphysical sphere of influence in which to retreat for some personal leisure and privacy. This, too, is an erasure -- of the family.

All these erasures zigzag across ideological seams. As home-makers, we have bought an ideal of home as both sight of pleasure and site of leisure, a fiction for working moms. Trying to materialize this fantasy by asserting our authority as head housekeepers only makes more work that further removes us from leisure. It also aligns the sight of the family in opposition to pleasure. Now I begin to persuade my friends, who most of the time resist my feminism, that the situation depriving them of down time "is not naturally occurring" or "inevitable" (Radway, 1986). In fact, it may be as much a result of our own practice of appointing ourselves household boss as it is the result of ideologies that "hail" us (Althusser, 1971) as home-makers. At the same time I have opened a discussion about household control as well as personal time and space -- for everyone -- in my own household. While I may not be ready to relinquish my symbolic custody of the house, at least I understand my desire for it. And I am consciously trying to invite my family to share that space with me.

To be sure, I find interpersonal and reflexive intervention difficult. But this kind of border-crossing communication inspires and informs my feminism. Becoming adept at locating "ideological seams" and reading for resistant "womanly subtexts" offers academic feminists a useful tool for connecting their scholarship to political action off campus, at home, in the community.

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